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**THE PEASANTRY AND THE STATE IN GHANA:
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRARIAN STAGNATION
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN GHANA**

by

SULLEY GARIBA, B.A. (Hon.), M.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
March 1989

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"THE PEASANTRY AND THE STATE IN GHANA:
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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 9, 1989

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the origins of agrarian stagnation and the persistence of the peasantry in northern Ghana. Its central argument is that this stagnation is the result of peasant adherence to the logic of subsistence and the inability of the state to transform or surpass this subsistence orientation. In fact, northern Ghana's incorporation into the international economy depreciated peasant productive capacity initially through the export of cheap labour from the region by the colonial state, but was not thorough enough to destroy the viability of peasant forms of production. Furthermore, while attempts by the post-colonial state to subsume the peasantry under capital intensive agricultural production schemes imposed an unbearable strain on subsistence food production by attracting peasants into wage labour, these schemes were unsustainable due to Ghana's worsening balance of payments position. The result of peasant neglect and the state's inability to sustain alternative forms of agriculture has been chronic food shortages, caused in part by the peasant reversion to subsistence production and an increasing peasant militancy. Hence the Ghanaian state has been forced to focus on the peasant system of food production rather than to surpass it.

Thus, although northern Ghana's incorporation into the commercial economy is partial and very recent, its unfolding story helps illustrate the fundamental issue of the persistence of the peasantry. This study focuses on the contradictory and uneven nature of capitalist transformation which partially preserved and partially destroyed the peasantry, but, in doing so, provided it with an 'exit option'. Such a study also illuminates the ambivalent functions of the state as an instrument of articulation forced to accommodate both the needs of the capitalist sectors for cheap food and cheap labour and the risk-averse and subsistence orientation of the peasantry.

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shortages. Indeed, near famine conditions were experienced in 1979/80 and in 1983.⁴ Neither have they succeeded in either transforming or surpassing peasant subsistence production.

This study will explain the origins of the agrarian crisis in northern Ghana by examining the relationship between the peasantry and the state in Ghana. The study will attempt to assess the persistence of a subsistence orientation among the peasantry, looking at the response of the peasantry to internal as well as external economic and political forces mediated through particular forms of the Ghanaian state. Specifically, the study will explain how the exercise of political power in northern Ghana has failed to generate the expanded reproduction and transformation of the peasant mode of production and, consequently, why peasant subsistence production continues to prevail over other forms of production in the region.

The central thesis of this study is that the peasantry in northern Ghana is resilient; that agrarian stagnation in the region is the outcome of a dual determination involving the state's inability to achieve social transformation and the peasants' reliance on subsistence as a basis for their survival. The contours of this process of dual determination were shaped, on the one

INTRODUCTION

One of the most profound social phenomena this century has witnessed is Africa's agrarian crisis. The catastrophe of Africa's food shortages and its recent famine experiences have generated a spate of analyses focussing on the role of the peasantry in explaining the causes of agrarian incapacity on the continent and on the centrality of the state in agrarian transformation.¹ Some of these have blamed the agrarian crisis on low peasant productivity and suggested that peasants cannot conceivably be in the forefront of socio-economic transformation in developing countries.² Others, such as the World Bank, have focussed on the modernization of rural peasant society and its transition from its traditional isolation to greater integration with the national economy.³ The policy implications of both intellectual and recent World Bank analyses of rural stagnation have been to invite massive investments on state initiated and private agricultural ventures in a bid to increase food productivity and surpass peasant production or to transform peasants directly into commercial farmers.

In northern Ghana where major state agricultural programs have been undertaken in the last twenty years, these policies have failed to prevent serious food

shortages. Indeed, near famine conditions were experienced in 1979/80 and in 1983.⁴ Neither have they succeeded in either transforming or surpassing peasant subsistence production.

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hand, by the social dynamics of the non-capitalist peasant society and, on the other, by the efforts of a state-directed capitalism seeking to transform its subsistence orientation.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the causes and consequences of agrarian stagnation in the relatively unpenetrated peasant agricultural sector of northern Ghana. In contrast to southern Ghana and many African countries such as Senegal, Mali and Sudan where the crisis of their food crop sectors was precipitated in part by the introduction of new export-oriented cash crops, the peripheral integration of northern Ghana into the colonial economic system and the unsuccessful attempts by post-colonial regimes to sustain alternative forms to peasant production have ensured the precarious persistence of peasant forms of traditional food production. Yet, while the importance of traditional or smallholder agriculture is recognized, the understanding of those systems is at best rudimentary as both official and intellectual attention has been devoted disproportionately to export crops. As Shaner et. al. observed,

Because of their historical concern with exports, for years many developing countries directed their agricultural research and extension efforts toward commercial farmers who ... [produced] commodities for export. Agricultural research and extension often served these commercial farmers quite well, but virtually ignored traditional farmers.

Even in national plans and strategies focussing on food self-sufficiency, minimum attention has been directed toward traditional food producers, the role of 'folk' agriculture in economic development, and possible ways of working within those systems to upgrade rather than replace them.⁶

This study will attempt to fill the gap created by the intellectual and political neglect of peasant food producers in northern Ghana. It will be established that the northern Ghanaian peasantry represents somewhat of "a periphery of the periphery" in that it has not been fully drawn into the orbit of international capitalism nor has it been fully captured by the Ghanaian state. As such, the pursuit of socio-economic transformation and the production of cheap wage goods characteristic of capitalism and aspired to by the post-independence regimes in Ghana have threatened the prospect for the assured survival of the northern Ghanaian peasantry.

Consequently, various state policies directed towards the development of the region have either engendered the diminution of productive forces of the peasantry by marginalizing peasant agriculture and promoting the export of labour to other sectors of the colonial economy, or have bypassed the peasants in an attempt to create an independent agrarian capitalist class. Conversely, the conditions which

sustain and make viable peasant production - easy access to abundant land and virtually free non-competitive family labour - have continued to provide security for peasant producers but not necessarily growth or surplus production for the wider national economy.

The questions that this study asks are: how is this specificity of the traditional peasant social formation of northern Ghana to be understood conceptually and how has it changed as a result of colonial domination? What are the constraints and limitations of post-colonial state policies aimed at transforming the peasantry and how have peasants reacted to these policies? Finally, what are the prospects for subsistence-based development alternatives in an economically and politically marginalized region such as northern Ghana? These questions will be dealt with, first, at a theoretical level.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a political economy approach in analyzing the origins, manifestations and implications of agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana. Steven Langdon takes political economy to mean

... the intermeshing of so-called 'political', 'economic', and social factors of change in one ongoing historical process. The dynamics of change emerge from the continuing interplay of economic

factors and related social classes; and those dynamics are reflected through institutional innovations and change.

In an attempt to apply the political economy method to this analysis of agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana, three themes will be developed. The first concerns the nature and specificity of the traditional peasant economy in relation to its adherence to a subsistence orientation and its risk averse behaviour. The second concerns the manner in which this peasant economy has been articulated to the wider political economy, especially through the instrument of the state, and how this affects the peasantry's capacity to reproduce a stable subsistence. The third deals with peasant responses to external as well as internal encroachments on their basis of survival.

The starting point of this study is an attempt to answer the question: how viable was the non-capitalist peasant economy of northern Ghana, and why did it not transcend the parameters of subsistence production? Dealing first with the traditional peasant social formation is necessary because of its overwhelming importance in the economy as a whole during the pre-colonial period and today, and because it is customarily regarded as the basis of transformation for countries wishing to achieve economic growth and social transformation.'

Before answering the first question, it is important to delineate the northern Ghanaian peasantry as a category of farmers whose principal unit of production and consumption is the household or family, who own their major means of production (land), have relatively easy access to unpaid family labour, and produce mainly for subsistence. The subsistence farmer is best described as one who consumes a majority of his or her production. The ratio of production consumed to that sold in the total stock of produce can be used to determine the degree of the peasant's subsistence orientation.⁹ This characterization of the peasantry and subsistence allows for the exclusion from this study of other farmers in the region who either sell most of their produce or produce non-edible products such as cotton, although these may remain self-sufficient in all or most of their needs.¹⁰

While producing for subsistence constitutes an important criterion for a peasant society, the concept of subsistence in studies of peasant societies is usually set opposite commercially-oriented economic activities. This dichotomy imposes onto peasant societies the necessity and, in most cases, the inevitability of agrarian transformation of either a capitalist or socialist variant. This is especially evident in Hyden's characterization of the

imminent breakdown of the subsistence-based society by "... men of destiny who can throw off the bonds imposed by the economy of affection and through their actions ... produce a more effective base for the pursuit of necessary macro-economic functions in society."¹¹ When this transition has not occurred, the peasant is said to be stagnant. Thus, agrarian stagnation is a concept whose meaning can only be understood in relation to a desired alternative, that is, agrarian transformation.

By contrast, this study focusses on a peasant social formation that embraces a commitment to subsistence security rather than agrarian transformation. The purpose of the argument which follows is thus to place the subsistence orientation - what Scott referred to as the "subsistence-ethic"¹² - at the centre of the analysis of agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana. What does this subsistence ethic mean? It entails a risk-averse behaviour that directs peasant preferences towards "survival-first".

The distinctive economic behaviour of the subsistence-oriented peasant family results from the fact that, unlike the capitalist enterprise, it is a unit of consumption as well as a unit of production. The family begins with a more or less irreducible subsistence consumer demand which it must meet in order to survive. This safety-

first maxim is, in part, a logical consequence of the ecological dependence of peasant livelihood which embodies a relative preference for subsistence security over tendencies towards high average income.

Living close to the subsistence margin and subject to the vagaries of weather and the claims of outsiders, the peasant household has little scope for the profit maximization calculus of traditional neoclassical economics. Typically, the peasant cultivator seeks to avoid the failure that will ruin him rather than attempting a big, but risky, living. In decision-making parlance his behaviour is risk-averse; he minimises the " subjective probability of the maximum loss."

Not only does this security-mindedness make sense but, as will be demonstrated in chapter one, it found expression in the matrix of powers which presided over the traditional peasant society of northern Ghana. The society and culture were organized so that household needs were met through the direct efforts of household members with little or no regard for commercial activities and without resort to market activities.¹⁴ Even though the traditional rulers who dominated the pre-colonial peasant social formation of northern Ghana extracted surpluses from the peasant producers, it was prudent to show some respect for the needs of the subordinate population by devoting such surpluses to subsistence needs.¹⁵ In short, social and political objectives consistent with the maintenance of subsistence stability in the peasant society were more important driving forces than tendencies towards social transformation.¹⁶

The argument adopted here represents a point of departure from approaches which focus on resource constraints and 'naturalistic' phenomena in explaining peasant incapacity in northern Ghana and, indeed, in the whole of Africa.¹⁷ Of these, there are those who cling to a form of technological determinism or cite environmental hazards as critical limiting factors in traditional African peasant agriculture.¹⁸ Schultz's conclusion that subsistence farmers are "efficient but poor" led him to argue that, though they act rationally, peasants are not able to increase production given the factors presently available to them.¹⁹ In its crudest form, this argument suggests that agrarian stagnation is the result of the use of archaic and rudimentary technology by the illiterate farming community whose fortunes are intrinsically linked with the rhythm of the seasons.²⁰ Central to Bourret's 'poor region syndrome' was the view that northern Ghana possessed no natural resources due to climatic limitations. Furthermore, in his view, the people lacked "intellectual capacity" and thus took no interest in commercial possibilities which could help develop their region, but rather "... preferred to maintain their primitive habits".²¹

Without doubt, the particular ecological niche occupied by some sectors of the peasantry in northern Ghana

exposes them to subsistence risks. The region has a predominantly arid climate, bordering on the fragile Sahelian zone which is often susceptible to the vicissitudes of the relatively dry, hot climate. Thus minimal rainfall, inadequate soil fertility, and the physical and health constraints that these may cause, do have some effect on peasant production.²² The point here is that, cognizant of the unstable environment, peasants draw on reservoirs of cultural and personal knowledge and attempt to survive in poor seasons while exploiting favorable years. African peasants have adopted innovative techniques and methods to cope with and, in some cases, overcome environmental constraints. These techniques have included the use of a whole range of land use patterns such as shifting cultivation, rotational bush fallow, mixed farming, and intensive cultivation of home gardens "...remarkably adapted to the ecological conditions of abundant but not very fertile soil".²³

Apart from these innovative technical arrangements, northern Ghanaian peasants have also adopted social mechanisms to mediate any food shortages which have been brought about by their variable climate. These have included patterns of reciprocity and forced generosity such as food exchanges between different ecologically specialized zones (for example, between the savanna and the forest

areas); between food surplus areas like the north-west and food deficit areas such as the north-east; and, within localized farming communities, between early and late harvest periods. Furthermore, communal land and work-sharing practices helped to even out the troughs in a family's resources which might otherwise have thrown them below subsistence. As Elwert and Wong noted,

[T]he peasant with an intact subsistence production allocates his factors of production to meet the needs of his household in such a way that even in the event of a bad harvest, there would be sufficient food.

Thus the assumption that the traditional peasant economy of northern Ghana was static and stagnant due to environmental constraints and peasant ignorance overlooks the ways in which the peasantry was able to work with and overcome, to some extent, this natural handicap. Therefore, both environmental research and human ecology hypotheses have suffered from a profound ahistoricism which has involved a neglect of political and economic structures. As Watts has observed,

...we clearly live not only in an environment constituted by natural processes but also in one of our own making, socially constituted by human practice and subject to on-going change and historical transformation.

One such historical transformation which had a profound effect on the precarious persistence (but lack of transformation) of the peasantry in northern Ghana was the

incorporation of the region into the international capitalist system by the colonial state.

The second theme of this study therefore addresses the question of how a particular society could be integrated into the world capitalist system and yet not only could fail to develop the vastly augmented forces of production integral to the development of capitalism in the west, but also - even more strikingly - could undergo a process of social transformation which undermined the ability of that society to reproduce itself in a manner consistent with its own continued survival.³⁶ In approaching this question with reference to northern Ghana, it is important to examine the manner in which the region's peasant social formations were incorporated into the colonial capitalist system, the role that the colonial state played in this process, and the effects of incorporation on the peasantry's capacity to reproduce a stable subsistence.

It is now commonplace to assert that one cannot understand the historical evolution of peasant social formations in the third world without taking into account their place in the evolving world economy. Two lines of thought will help shape an appreciation of the structural constraints on development and the contradictory process of transformation in the wider context of the international

economic set-up. The first view believes that in the encounter between capitalism and the peasantry, the latter will ultimately be transformed into a proletariat even if they become semi-proletarians for a while." The second focuses on the rigidities or blocks to transformation, emphasizing the uncertain trajectory that can come from the articulation of pre-capitalism or non-capitalist social formations with the capitalist mode.²⁸ While both views acknowledge the persistence of the peasantry and the inevitability of change, this study draws heavily on the latter view in accounting for the effects of the uneven pattern of incorporation of northern Ghana into a capitalist international economy.

Analyses of the intrusion of colonial capitalism in northern Ghana from the first perspective have focussed almost exclusively on the logic and tendencies of global capitalism which have reduced the region and its peasant social formations to serve global capital accumulation needs or stagnate. Shepherd's authoritative work on peasants in northern Ghana starts from the premise that "... the administration of northern Ghana as a labour reserve by the colonial regime set severe limits on the extent to which agricultural modernization was possible under both colonial and post-colonial regimes."²⁹ Thus, most of the region's problems are blamed on colonialism and the continuing role

of imperialism in structuring development priorities in Ghana.

While the studies by Shepherd and others in this genre¹⁰ offer important directions in conceptualizing the macro-economic history of a marginalized region such as northern Ghana by arguing that peasant farming was eroded by colonial capitalism, they did not specify the manner in which capitalism affected the internal structure of agriculture in the region. The vital point is that the forms of production that survived in northern Ghana were not doomed to rapid erosion; rather, "non-capitalist forms of production were articulated into the capitalist forms of commodity circulation without themselves being - or becoming - strictly capitalist enterprises."¹¹ The mechanism of articulation involved a continuous process of interaction between the pre-existing peasant mode and the new capitalist mode introduced through the colonial state. Through this process the peasant social formation of northern Ghana was subjected to a contradictory transformation which entailed the preservation as well as the destruction of its internal structures thereby resulting in a variety of intermediate hybrid forms. To understand this preservation-destruction dialectic, it is important to examine two notions by which non-capitalist modes of production may be subsumed by capitalism: real and formal subsumption.

Real subsumption means a situation whereby the enterprise of peasant production effectively ceases to exist and where its formal independence and self-contained reproduction is converted into the complete dependence of free labour on capital.³² In this context, peasant households are severed from direct reciprocal ties, both horizontal and vertical, for the renewal of their means of production - family labour - and of their subsistence, and come to depend increasingly on commodity relations for reproduction.³³ Conversely, formal subsumption pertains where the peasant mode of production retains its independence without those mechanisms, such as private expropriation of land and capitalist exploitation of wage labour, which uproot the patriarchal sufficiency of the peasant producers. In this context, the new conjunctures of capitalist production, in particular, the new relations of exploitation are subordinate to the old productive and labour processes of the peasant mode.³⁴ This diversity in the outcome of capitalist intrusion in non-capitalist forms of production means that we cannot assume a priori that capital always transforms all forms of production in a linear path or that the state always facilitates this process in the direction dictated by capital.

The process of subsumption, then, must address the particular historic form of international capital in relation to the specific non-capitalist formation that it confronts.³⁵ Within the general framework of colonial capitalist penetration in Ghana, the south emerged as an area of predominantly capitalist social relations in the mines and on cocoa and palm oil estates while the north served as a labour reserve producing a migrant labour force for the south, but retaining its basic structures of peasant food production for subsistence.

However, while colonialism did have a pervasive impact on northern Ghana, it destroyed no 'petty-agrarian capitalists' à la Polly Hill (because there were none in the region);³⁶ nor did it transform most peasant cultivators into wage workers.³⁷ In northern Ghana, the integration of the peasant economic system into the colonial economic system did not entail the widespread appropriation and privatization of land, nor did it entail a significant transformation of the forces of peasant production. Indeed, the colonial state rather ironically preserved the peasant forms of production by limiting the extent of private property and private investment in the region. Thus for the peasants in northern Ghana, incorporation into the global capitalist relations of production meant that they "...went into the colonial period with hoes in their hands and

emerged from that period in the same technologically [if not economically] deficient position"¹⁸ - hence, the preservative aspect of colonialism in which peasant smallholder production still predominates.

This precarious persistence of the peasantry cannot be posed only in relation to its functionality to capital; rather, the hybrid forms of peasant production in the north should be understood in terms of the limits imposed by capital on their stable reproduction. As Bernstein noted,

It is not capital nor imperialism which reproduces the peasantry - the peasantry reproduce themselves through their own labour. The question is how the conditions of production and reproduction are determined, by the operations of capital ... and the state.

Thus, it is important to note that the penetration of capital in northern Ghana, however partial, progressively undermined the ability of domestic forms of production to reproduce themselves.

Therefore, apart from its preservative dimension, another significance of colonialism in northern Ghana was that the impact of market forces upon the precapitalist society undermined the pre-existing social insurance patterns and eroded the viability of the peasantry's subsistence orientation; hence the destructive side of its subsumption. Before the advent of colonialism,

... social equilibrium depended in both the long and short run on a balance of transfers of peasant surpluses to the rulers and the provision of minimum security for the cultivator. Sharing resources within communal organizations and reliance on ties with powerful patrons were recurrent ways in which peasants strove to reduce risks and to improve their stability, and both were condoned and frequently supported by the state.

As will be shown in chapter two, colonialism monetized the economy and created a unified national market for food and commodities. This forced the rural producers in northern Ghana into partial commodity production through an increasing commitment of food to the market. Yet, while there was an increased demand on peasants to meet new market opportunities nationwide the impetus for peasant expansion and transformation was circumscribed by the export of labour out of the region. The withdrawal of labour from use value production in turn undermined the material reproduction of northern Ghana's peasantry.⁴¹ Thus, the net effect of the colonial capitalist interaction with the peasant social formations of northern Ghana has been in the stimulation and simultaneous diminution of peasant productive forces.

While this structural contradiction prevented the achievement of any long-term stability or linear progression in the pattern of transformation of peasant agriculture during colonial rule, colonial capitalism fell short of breaking the circle of reciprocity and subsistence orientation of the peasant sector, thereby leaving open the

possibility of peasant autonomy. To grasp the significance of this contradictory articulation of the peasantry in northern Ghana, let us turn to the post-colonial era, for it is here that the most far-reaching attempts to transform peasant subsistence production have occurred.

In contrast to the colonial state's interest in maintaining northern Ghana as a traditional reserve economy for food and cheap labour, the post-colonial state has been at the forefront of attempts to transform the peasant economic structure of the region from production for subsistence into production for exchange. It is generally the case that, in non-settler areas of Africa as compared with Latin America and Asia, there has been less direct involvement in agricultural production of large-scale capitals such as domestic or international agribusiness.⁴² Hence the articulation of peasant forms of production to the wider national and international economy cannot be discussed without considering the instrumental role that the post-colonial state has played in efforts to promote agrarian change and social transformation since independence. The third theme of this study, therefore, is one which systematically brings into focus the encounter between peasant producers in rural northern Ghana and classes based in the state as well as those who exercise political power at the local level - chiefs and traditional rulers.

Central to this analysis of the impact of post-colonial state policies on social relations of production in the northern Ghanaian countryside are three critical questions: how does the matrix of powers in which peasant production occurs impinge on the continued reproduction of peasant subsistence? What form does the resistance of peasants to external and internal encroachment on their basis of survival take? How has this antagonism been contained within existing power relations, and in fact turned into a force for the reproduction of these very relations, and not for their total transformation? Let us turn to the first question.

The post-colonial state in Ghana emerged as a complex and an unstable coalition of forces representing, in accordance with their relative political power, the interests of a dominant export economy and society in the south and a subordinate subsistence sector in the north. The unequal representation of social forces inside the state apparatus reflected the imperatives of maintaining equilibrium in a neo-colonial economy dominated by cocoa, mineral and timber exports. One of the ways by which this equilibrium was maintained was through a cheap food policy that sought to provide adequate food at low prices and to underwrite the cost of labour to the export sector.

Therefore, the internal dominance of forces in the south within the state apparatus provided the context in which agrarian policies favoured food production alternatives that bypassed the peasant food producers of northern Ghana.

The ensuing policies which involved the establishment of state farms, the creation of agricultural co-operatives of a partisan nature, and the support for an agrarian capitalist class failed to generate the anticipated increases in food production in a sustained manner even though they involved substantial state resources. However, they set in motion a disruptive economic transition from the predominant "inward orientation" of the peasant family to greater increased "outward orientation" marked by the substantial involvement of individual peasants and households with external "multiplier mechanisms: markets, cash, and wage labour."

The reasons for the failure of these policies were many and varied as will be shown in chapter three. Suffice it to say that the most profound constraint on the state's ability to subsume peasant production under alternative forms of production oriented towards the market remained the peasantry's commitment to risk minimization. In the face of economic crisis, the selective allocation of resources to capitalist-oriented agriculture and a chronic drought during

the 1970s, peasant households reverted to subsistence production in order to give their members assured minimum security. Thus, the primary goal of risk minimization became

... evident among the peasants through the priority given to food crops and the tendency to engage in intercropping. Through this mechanism peasants are able to rely on cash income for food purchases in case the food crops fail, and, conversely, can turn to home-grown foods should cash income prove insufficient.

Therefore, the peasantry's tendency to revert to subsistence security rather than to face the uncertain prospect of commercial production can be explained in part because of the risks involved in the latter project. In a marginal area such as northern Ghana, risk avoidance became, once again, an eminently rational strategy. The result has been a growing discrepancy between the goals of the modern state and the persistence of a peasant agricultural sector operating at low levels of output, mainly for subsistence, and producing only marginal surpluses for sale.

This problem of a persistent subsistence peasantry not producing significantly for the market and resisting subordination has been a source of frustration for policy makers seeking to transform peasant subsistence agriculture and academics seeking to explain agrarian stagnation in relation to the domestic market. The failure to recognize just how subsistence production is organized and the role

that culture, social structure and social rather than economic obligations play in supporting peasant practices have led to misinterpretations of the role that peasant producers play in the making of Africa's agrarian crisis; and, consequently, about the direction and prospects of change.

In the case of northern Ghana, two crucial points about state policies and peasant responses need to be emphasized. First, the interest of international capital and the state in the transformation of agriculture in the north has been secondary to that of maintaining the survival and profitability of the export sectors in the south, hence, the less thorough penetration of the region by capital and the state. This minimum penetration, in turn, left open the possibility for independent peasant actions. Second, peasant producers in northern Ghana have not been passive receptors of the state policies which have encroached on their basis of survival. These policies have provoked a reaction within the peasant society that led to the emergence of a distinct internal transformation of their social organization and to their corresponding militancy.

As will be demonstrated in chapter four, the hierarchical social relationship of the traditional peasant society in which direct producers were subordinate to the

traditional rulers and where the latter appropriated subsistence surpluses is being transformed from within, in that, households have become smaller and less co-operative and, direct producers are asserting their independence over the means of production and their produce. This increased peasant economic autonomy has provided the material and organizational basis for collective resistance to outside oppressors. Thus, the partial disintegration of the mutual web of social obligations in the traditional peasant society has resulted not in its total breakdown, but in a crisis in the exercise of power leading to a series of peasant rebellions throughout northern Ghana.⁴ This response by the peasants implies that,

... we are often likely to find the strongest resistance to capitalism and to an intrusive state among the more isolated peasantries, with entrenched precapitalist values ...

Whether or not this resistance will lead to alternative forms of transformation has been a subject of debate.

According to Mamdani, peasant resistance

... no matter how pervasive, is at best defensive. It is a rearguard action that is incapable of arresting the process of capital accumulation, let alone transforming the social order. In the dialectic between resistance to the [traditional] social order and integration into it, its significance is secondary. The primary tendency is the integration of the peasant into the existing [capitalist] order.

Yet, in the case of northern Ghana, peasant resistance to the encroachment on their subsistence base constrained not only their complete integration into the capitalist social

order, it also generated two indirect consequences which suggest the possibility of alternative forms of transformation in the region.

First, the partial withdrawal of peasants from commodity production influenced the emergence of an urban peasantry, especially during periods of recurrent economic crises when alternative forms of food production became unsustainable as sources of cheap food for urban residents. Second, the increasing disarticulation of the rural peasant sector from the market led the state to establish the Northern Regional Rural Integrated Program (NORRIP) which provides peasants with direct access to better technology, credit and amenities to enhance their production of a marketed surplus of food. Although these two tendencies are recent and their impact uncertain, they raise the prospect of either an "outward" transformation of the peasantry led by the expansion of urban farming enterprises and the systematic subsumption of the rural peasants or an "inward" transformation involving the breakdown of peasant social organization, increasing rural economic differentiation and class formation generated by NORRIP.

These changes notwithstanding, the important distinction in understanding the character of transformation in northern Ghana is whether or not internal conditions

exist for the support of the peasant production unit and its reproduction at the level of subsistence. The case of northern Ghana shows a level of peasant resilience which can be explained by the inherent advantages of peasant production - easy access to land and free family labour, the risk averse behaviour of peasants, and the contradictory nature of their subsumption, which marginalized their productive forces but was incomplete under colonialism and unsustainable under the post-colonial state.

It is thus the objective of this study to clarify the problems of peasant persistence and agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana through an examination of the nature of the pre-colonial peasant economy; the manner in which the region was incorporated into the world capitalist economy through colonialism; and the effects of post-colonial state policies on the peasantry. By weaving these themes together, the study will show how the peasant economy in northern Ghana has evolved over the last century, and how an analysis of the complex and contradictory relations between the peasantry and the state can contribute towards an understanding of the persistence and apparent stagnation of the peasantry.

Organizing the Study

This examination of the political economy of agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana is based, in part, on empirical findings supplemented by archival research and a host of secondary sources on peasant social formations (see Appendix 1 and 2 for a detailed summary of the research methodology and a sample of the survey questionnaire for peasants in the region). The study begins with the dissection of the structure of pre-colonial northern Ghanaian society that supported the admixture of subsistence practices at the household level. Located in a specific historical context, chapter one will examine the ways in which peasant households were organized, discuss the practices associated with the use of household labour in peasant production, and analyze the particular forms of appropriation and social obligations associated with the disposal of subsistence surpluses. Finally, the chapter will discuss the social organization of the village as well as the overarching state system - the kingdoms - in pre-colonial northern Ghana. The purpose of examining the traditional peasant economy is to show how and why the self-sufficient and self-contained peasant production of pre-colonial northern Ghana favored the pursuit of production for need over production for exchange.

The colonial annexation of northern Ghana only partially integrated the region into the worldwide system of capitalist relations of production. Chapter two will examine why and how the colonial state fostered the preservation as well as the destruction of the traditional peasant economy in the region. This chapter will look at colonial development policies in the region: the export of labour from the region to other sectors of the export economy; the policies limiting infrastructural and commercial investments in the region; and the impact these had on peasant agriculture in northern Ghana.

The central concerns of chapter three will be the extent to which successive post-colonial governments bypassed the peasantry in northern Ghana in attempts to create alternatives to existing peasant forms of production in the region. The chapter will provide an analysis of the social basis of the post-colonial state in Ghana in order to explain the way in which state agrarian policies sought to subordinate peasants to the control of social classes located in the state. The chapter will examine three manifestations of these state production alternatives: the state farms option, the liberalized agricultural regime and state support for capitalist agriculture and an agrarian capitalist class in the region. By altering production activities away from household need toward commercial

opportunities, these policies set forth a chain of events which have created a set of undesirable conditions, not the least of which has been a threat to household food self-sufficiency.

The economic and political consequences of state agrarian policies of the post-independence period will be examined in chapter four. Of particular concern in this chapter are the constraints imposed on peasant subsistence security and the reaction of peasants to these constraints through adjusting household labour needs and favoring production for subsistence over production for sale. The chapter will therefore describe and analyze the 'silent' but effective economic reactions of the northern Ghanaian peasantry to the general crises in the regional and national economy during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It will be argued that the perceived agrarian and food crises and the general decline in capability of the regional as well as national economy during the last decade, left the peasantry with its most effective weapon: that of 'opting-out' or reverting mainly to subsistence production.

These economic actions have also had political repercussions as peasants felt empowered to challenge traditional modes of domination in areas where they had been deprived of equal status and access to the major means of

production - land. The second section of this chapter therefore examines two rural-peasant political protests which occurred in northern Ghana during the early 1980s - disputes between the Gonja and the Vagalla; and the Nanumba and the Konkomba.

The failure of state initiated production alternatives, the peasant reversion to subsistence, and the apparent peasant militancy in northern Ghana in the early 1980s resulted in a profound economic and political crisis which diminished the state's centrality in the peasant socio-economic formation of northern Ghana. The state's latest response to this situation has been the initiation of an integrated rural development program which seeks to reinforce and enhance peasant subsistence production rather than surpass or replace it. Established by the Ghanaian state and financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), an elaborate planning institution has now been created in the northern region to co-ordinate and implement integrated development activities in the rural areas of the region - the Northern Regional Rural Integrated Program (NORRIP). Chapter five will analyze NORRIP's role both in terms of its capacity to effect significant changes in the structure of peasant production and in re-establishing the state's centrality to the political and economic development processes in the region.

Although the plans envisaged by NORRIP have yet to be fully implemented, its approach to agricultural development began with a dismissal of notions such as "peasant conservatism". By promoting village-level development initiatives, the program leaves open the possibility that existing peasant economic activities imbued with a subsistence orientation can be reconciled with the long-term prospect of an improvement in technology and an expansion in marketed agricultural surpluses for the wider regional economy.

The question of the sustainability of this "subsistence-centered" development option in northern Ghana is especially important now that the Ghanaian government is vigorously pursuing a structural adjustment program inspired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. With this program comes substantial cut-backs in public spending, a return to faith in commercial activities (including commercial agriculture), and massive borrowing to revive the traditional export sectors - mining, cocoa, and timber - to earn foreign exchange and service the mounting debt. The dilemma associated with the apparent contradiction between the state's commitment to NORRIP and the pursuit of its structural adjustment agenda will be discussed in the second section of chapter five. The study

will conclude by examining the theoretical and practical significance of a peasantry undergoing an "inward" rather than an "outward" transformation.

Conclusion

The impression normally presented of the peasantry in Africa is that of a passive policy taker whose further development can only be attained by the decisive intervention of the state and/or other external development agents. Rarely is any serious effort made to understand the logic of peasant actions, nor is there a recognition of the potential impact on overall regional and national development of peasant responses to the implicit and explicit threats to their basis of survival and reproduction as a distinct socio-economic category. This study will show that the peasantry in northern Ghana possess an intrinsic viability, an ability to survive under extremely adverse conditions. The focus here will thus be on the preservation (not decomposition) of the peasantry, and the continuity of its historic tendencies of providing subsistence security under different social orders - pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. However, this precarious persistence has been at the expense of any further development of its

productive forces or any significant increase in the level of surplus production for sale.

The political economy of agrarian stagnation in the northern region of Ghana is thus the subject of this study. Clearly, the fate of the northern Ghanaian peasantry has significance both for theories of peasantries and for the process of subsumption and an alternative set of premises for analyzing peasant societies and agrarian stagnation or development from the perspective of peasant priorities needs to be explored. Therefore, the task of constituting a regional instance of a given mode of production, in this case the peasant mode of production in northern Ghana, and the analysis of the juridico-political structure or state forms acting upon the peasantry in the region, requires a detailed historical understanding of the region's pre-colonial past. Hence, the focus in the next chapter on peasantry and the state in pre-colonial northern Ghana.

Footnotes

1. This includes among others, Goran Hyden, Beyond Ujama in Tanzania (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); and his No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Judith Heyer, et. al., (editors), Rural Development in Tropical Africa (London: Macmillan Press, 1981); Stephen K. Commins et. al., (eds.), Africa's Agrarian Crisis: The Roots of Famine (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986); and Michael Watts, Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
2. Hyden, (1980), op. cit., p. 16.
3. World Bank, "Rural Development," in Assault on World Poverty. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, p. 3. (pp. 1-98). For a detailed critique of notions of peasant incapacity in Africa and the strategies for their "development", see Gavin Williams, "Farmers, Headers, and the State," and also his "Rural Development: Partners and Adversaries," Rural Africana, 25-26(Spring-Fall 1986), pp. 1-23.
4. Andrew Shepherd (1981), "Agrarian Change in Northern Ghana: Public Investment, Capitalist Farming and Famine," in Judith Heyer et. al., op. cit., pp. 168-191.
5. W.W. Shaner, et. al., Farming Systems Research and Development (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 163-164.
6. Donald E. Vermeer, "Food Sufficiency and Farming in the Future of West Africa," Journal of African Studies, 10, 3, (Fall 1983), p. 74.
7. Steven Langdon, "The Political Economy of Dependence: Notes Towards an Analysis of Multinational Corporations in Kenya," Journal of East African Research and Development, Volume 4, 2 (1974) p. 123.
8. Economic anthropologists and economic historians have long recognized the importance of the rudimentary peasant economy in analyzing the performance of contemporary African political economies. See especially Claude Meillassoux, "The Social Organization of the Peasantry," Journal of Peasant Studies, 1, 1 (1973), pp. 81-90; and also his Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and Domestic Community (London: Macmillan, 1981); Anthony Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London: Longman Group Limited, 1973), pp. 1-77; and George Dalton, (ed.), Research in Economic Anthropology (Connecticut: JAI Press, 1978).

9. Clifton Wharton, "Subsistence Agriculture: Concepts and Scope," in Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., ed., Subsistence Agriculture and Economic Development (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1969), p. 15.
10. The production of cotton in northern Ghana is rather sporadic and discontinuous, depending on the level of government subsidies. Thus, although cotton production gained prominence in the mid-1970s when the government established the Cotton Development Board to promote domestic self-sufficiency in the crop, the decline of subsidies has led to a considerable reduction in the number of farmers planting cotton.
11. Hyden (1983), op. cit., p. 24.
12. James Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 2.
13. Ibid., p. 4.
14. For a discussion of peasant subsistence orientation, see Garth Massey, Subsistence and Change: Lessons of Agropastoralism in Somalia (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), p. 17.
15. Scott (1976), op. cit., p. 6.
16. This was central to Hopkins' analysis of agrarian stagnation in the West African savannah during the pre-colonial period. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 75-6.
17. F. M. Bourret, Ghana: The Road to Independence, 1919 - 1957 (New York: Stanford University Press, 1960); George Benneh, "Water requirements and limitations imposed on agricultural development in northern Ghana", in I.M. Ofori (ed.), Factors of Agricultural Growth in West Africa (Accra: University of Ghana, 1973); and John Nabilla, "Rural Depopulation in Northern Ghana with special reference to the migration of Frafra people," (Paper presented to West African Regional Seminar on Population Studies, November 30 - December 4, 1972).
18. See especially Jack Goody, Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); and his "Polity and Means of Production," in P.C.W. Gutkind and P. Waterman (eds.), African Social Studies: A Radical Reader. London: Heinemann, 1977, pp. 93-115.

19. Theodore Schultz, Transforming Traditional Agriculture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 38 cited in Massaey, op. cit., p. 18.

20. Indeed Hyden has suggested that "... because of the simple technology used by the producers in rural Africa, the quality of soils, and the predominantly rain-fed type of agriculture, it would be wrong to assume that the peasant mode provides the scope for any dramatic productivity increases." Hyden (1983), op. cit., p. 196.

21. Bourret, op. cit., p. 85.

22. The negative impact of environmentally-induced health hazards on agricultural production in a part of northern Ghana has been recorded by J.M. Hunter, "Seasonal Hunger in a part of the West African Savanna: a survey of body weights in Nangodi, north-eastern Ghana," Institute of British Geographers Transactions, 41, 1967, pp. 167-186.

23. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production," in Peter Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein, (eds.), Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, second edition (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), p. 106. See also, Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 32-38 for a fairly comprehensive discussion of land use patterns and cultivation methods designed to conserve soil fertility in the tropical savanna.

24. Cited in Watts, op. cit., p. 192.

25. Watts, op. cit., p. 14.

26. Geoffrey Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis (London: MacMillan, 1975), pp. 54-55; and as applied to northern Nigeria, see Watts, op. cit.; and also Robert Shenton, The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

27. For a detailed discussion of this approach, see Henry Bernstein, "Notes on Capital and the Peasantry," Review of African Political Economy, 10 (1978), pp. 60-73.

28. For a detailed discussion of this perspective, see Pierre Philippe Rey, "Class Contradiction in Lineage Societies," Critique of Anthropology, 4, 13-14 (1979), pp. 41-60; and also Barbara Bradby, "The Destruction of the Natural Economy," Economy and Society, 4, 2 (1975), pp. 127-161. The 'articulation of modes of production' perspective has been applied to an analysis of peasant social formations in Ghana by Beverly Grier, "Underdevelopment, Modes of Production, and the State in Colonial Ghana," African

Studies Review, xxiv, 1 (March 1981), pp. 21-47.

29. Andrew Shepherd, "The Development of Capitalist Rice Farming in Northern Ghana," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979), p. 1. A similar theme runs through the work of Nii-K Plange, "Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1976; and his "Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana: Natural Causes or Colonial Capitalism?," Review of African Political Economy, 18-19 (May-December 1979), pp. 4-19.

30. Several studies on northern Ghana have argued quite convincingly that the colonization of northern Ghana and subsequently its incorporation into the international capitalist system should be the primary focus of analysis in understanding the region's underdevelopment. See especially, Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 4-13; and also Shepherd (1979), op. cit.

31. Watts, op. cit., p. 21.

32. For a thorough examination of this concept, see Jairus Banaji, "Modes of Production in Materialist Conception of History," Capital and Class, 3 (Autumn 1977), pp. 1-44; and also his "Backward Capitalism, Primitive Accumulation and Modes of Production," Journal of Contemporary Asia, 3, 4 (1973), pp. 393-413.

33. Harriet Friedman, "Household Production and the National Economy: Concepts for the Analysis of Agrarian Formations," The Journal of Peasant Studies, 7, 2 (January 1980), pp. 162-163.

34. Rey applies this distinction between real and formal subsumption in his study of social formations in lineage societies. See Pierre Philippe Rey, "Class Contradiction in Lineage Societies," Critique of Anthropology, 4, 13-14 (1979), pp. 41-60.

35. Watts, op. cit., p. 22.

36. This assumption was implicit in Polly Hill, "Some Characteristics of Indigenous West African Enterprises," Economic Bulletin of Ghana, 6, 1962, pp. 3-14; and also her Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

37. For this view of the colonial impact on northern Ghana, see Nii-K Plange, "Opportunity Cost and Labour Migration: A Misinterpretation of Proletarianization in Northern Ghana,"

The Journal of Modern African Studies, 17, 4(1979b), pp. 655-676; and his "Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana" (1976), op. cit., especially pp. 126-206.

38. Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (London: Bogle L'Overture, 1972), p. 239.

39. Henry Bernstein. "Notes on Capital and Peasantry," in John Harriss, ed., Rural Development: Theories on Peasant Economy and Agrarian Change. London: Hutchinson and Company Publishers, 1962, p. 160.

40. Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 279.

41. For a detailed analysis of the impact of colonial capitalism on peasant social formations in Africa, see Bernstein (1979), op. cit., pp. 423-425.

42. Ibid., (1979), op. cit., p. 433.

43. Joel Migdal, Peasants, Politics, and Revolution: Pressures Toward Political and Social Change in the Third World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 87. Cited in Theda Skocpol, "What Makes Peasants Revolutionary?" Comparative Politics Volume 14, # 3, April 1982, pp. 368-9.

44. Goran Hyden, "Final Rejoinder," Development and Change Volume 18, # 4, 1987, p. 663.

45. While the alterations in production relations within the household and the regional economy suggests that some of the more destructive effects of capitalism noted by Shenton and Lennihan in their study of northern Nigeria have percolated through in northern Ghana, the Ghanaian state's inability to sustain its agricultural schemes during the 1960s and 1970s limited such destructive effects. By contrast, the Nigerian state used oil revenue to boost agricultural spending and food imports and to invest in large agricultural schemes in the north. This sustained support for capitalist agriculture may have resulted in the more successful breakdown of peasant social organization in northern Nigeria. For details of the Nigerian case, see Robert Shenton and Louise Lennihan, "Capital and Class: Peasant Differentiation in Northern Nigeria," Journal of Peasant Studies, 9, 1(October 1981), pp. 47-70; and also, Watts, op. cit.

46. James Scott, "Hegemony and the Peasantry," Politics and Society, 7, 3(1977), p. 289.

47. Mahmood Mamdani, "Extreme but not Exceptional: Towards an Analysis of the Agrarian Question in Uganda," Journal of Peasant Studies, 14, 2(January 1987), pp. 219-220.

CHAPTER I.

THE PEASANTRY AND THE STATE IN PRE-COLONIAL NORTHERN GHANA: THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF PEASANT SUBSISTENCE ORIENTATION

The world of peasants is neither self contained nor static. This is why an analysis of agrarian relations, no matter how microscopic its empirical subject, must begin by setting this subject matter within a broad historical context.

Mahmood Mamdani, 1987.

To understand this broader historical context in the case of contemporary northern Ghana is to grasp one important feature about its political economy. As a rural economy dominated by peasant smallholders, much of northern Ghanaian society continues to this day to leave the impression of changelessness in that peasants still till the land with hoes and chiefs still rule. Yet, behind this superficial continuity, a world has changed. This chapter will provide a basis for the evaluation of changes in the peasant social formation of northern Ghana by establishing the significance of pre-colonial socio-historical processes. It will be demonstrated how the persistence of a subsistence ethic among the peasantry, the so-called stagnation of peasant productive forces in the region, was shaped by the structure and orientation of household production itself.

To do this, the chapter will examine first the economic structure of pre-colonial northern Ghana and the role of the peasant mode of production to show that while exploitation based on the household prevailed, the limited scope of surplus production and the use to which this surplus was applied precluded accumulation and further material production. By analyzing the social relations of production and specifically the matrix of powers in which production occurred in pre-colonial northern Ghana, it will be argued here that while non-producing classes existed and controlled the limited peasant surpluses, they were required by tradition to redistribute such surpluses among the wider kin group. Therefore, social obligations associated with presiding over the production process rendered tendencies toward social transformation unnecessary. To understand the constraints on the development of peasant productive forces in northern Ghana, let us turn to the structure of production in the traditional peasant society.

Economic Structure and the Peasant Mode of Production in Northern Ghana

Although agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana has been characterised most noticeably by the low levels of peasant production and the recurrent food shortages that the region has experienced in the last century,¹ it is erroneous to equate low output with agrarian stagnation. To do that

would be taking effect for cause. Rather, the apparent incapacity of peasant forces of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana to surpass the level of subsistence was fundamental to the logic of the peasant mode of production which, on the one hand, permitted the production of only limited surpluses, while, on the other, ensured the distribution and redistribution of that surplus to secure social stability and order.

The nature of this subsistence logic needs to be elucidated by reference to a peasant mode of production and the way it functioned in pre-colonial northern Ghana. On the theoretical level, the concept of mode of production is an abstract and formal specification of relations that provides an essential tool for the analysis of historical experience.² As noted in the introduction, the peasant mode of production in northern Ghana is typified by production based on the use of family labour, and characterized by the production of food crops mainly for subsistence on land to which farmers have common or communal access. Although this category of farmers is predominant in the region, it does not have concrete or exclusive existence in its pure form as there are other variations of peasants in the region as well as the country. These include a few large and wealthy farmers employing labour and producing mainly for sale and also farmers engaged in the production of cash crops for

export. The concept of mode of production allows us to examine the socio-economic system of peasant agriculture in northern Ghana by analyzing the productive forces (resources, work force, technology); the forms of exploitation and appropriation; and, above all, the social relations of production internal to that category of production.'

In pre-colonial northern Ghana, production was varied and based on three related activities: peasant agriculture, including fishing, animal husbandry and salt production; rudimentary cottage industries including iron mining and crafts; and long-distance trade. Of these, domestic agriculture was most important owing to the consumption needs of the people and the proximity of the northern savannah to the north African desert regions with their strong demand for grain and other foodstuffs.⁴ The possibilities of internal and external demand for agricultural produce therefore increased the potential for the production of surpluses.

That this potential was never fully exploited was perhaps less of a product of fatalism towards the natural environment or ignorance of the peasant farmers than it was an economic choice resulting from the vector of social forces associated with the peasant mode of production.'

What were these vectors which had debilitating effects on the development of peasant forces of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the character of exploitation in the primary producing unit - the household - in pre-colonial northern Ghana and, more importantly, to understand the social obligations of the exploiting groups within the household.

Exploitation was inherent in the peasant household production units of northern Ghana. However, the social context of that exploitation set it apart from general notions of exploitation. Exploitation in the Marxist sense posits the extraction of surplus by one class of non-producers from the value produced by another class. This general characterization of exploitation implies a definition of surplus, where that surplus consists of any excess over the requirements for the reproduction of the producers' labour power and their means of production.' It also implies the existence of a group of non-producers whose measure of control in the production process arises out of their ownership of the major means of production.

Using both criteria of exploitation - surplus and an exploiting class - it is difficult to discern the mechanisms of exploitation in the traditional forms of

production in pre-colonial northern Ghana. It is even more difficult to distinguish between the exploitation that occurs in the peasant mode of production as opposed to that in other modes in which surplus is appropriated privately. The view that agricultural surplus production was limited by the level of technology and unfavorable climate, coupled with the belief that land, the major means of production was communally owned, makes any claim of exploitation, strictly defined, in traditional peasant agriculture appear untenable.

Yet a closer investigation of the inner logic of peasant production in pre-colonial northern Ghana reveals subtle and incipient mechanisms of exploitation. The peasant economic structure of the region was not schematically grouped en bloc as though it was an homogeneous entity. Examining the land tenure system in pre-colonial northern Ghana, what appeared to be communal ownership of property tended invariably to be a peculiar form of private ownership. There was a group which controlled the major means of production - land - in the traditional society of northern Ghana separate from those who produced directly.

Two notions of land ownership prevailed throughout pre-colonial northern Ghana: ritual land ownership and

usufructuary ownership. Let us first deal with the question of ritual land ownership for it was here that the peasant household unit of production was articulated to the wider society around it.

The ritual ownership of land was vested in the earthpriest (tengdana). Each tengdana was the master (dana) of a particular locality or land (teng) over which he exercised ritual jurisdiction on behalf of his lineage or clan.⁷ Thus, the basic territorial and political boundaries separating each clan or village also defined the spheres of influence of the various earth priests (tengdana); and there was hardly any doubt which tengdana really owned any land, even if the land in question had never been settled or farmed.⁸

To the outsider, the symbolism that every piece of land was held in trust by the priest on behalf of the ancestral spirit was given an eternal meaning removed from material reality. These ancestral spirits known as fetishes could not exist independently of people. Since every fetish had an owner or custodian, the tengdana who personified the land fetishes necessarily owned the land. Thus, the fetishes were important only in terms of their significance to society.⁹

The tengdana required certain material obligations from households and individuals to whom they granted land for use. At harvest time, every land holder was expected to give a basketful of corn or millet or a head load of yams to the tengdana.¹⁰ Although this was looked upon only as a token rent, it nevertheless rendered the landholder - the tengdana - a landlord. These fiefs functioned not only as rents, but also established ties of clientage between the direct producers and the tengdana. Thus although the direct producers of food, that is, family members in the household units, had possession of their means of production - their labour power and nominal ownership of land - the condition of pre-capitalist rents paid to the tengdana presupposed a mechanism by which production surpluses were appropriated by non-laborers. This level of surplus appropriation by the tengdana therefore depreciated the stock of disposable surplus available to the producing household as a whole.

Furthermore, at the level of household production, usufructuary rights to land, that is, the actual claim on the cultivation of household or individual plots, were more crucial in the control and appropriation of peasant household surpluses. These rights were clearly delineated and could often be inherited by individual household leaders and elders. Thus, if individual tenure and private ownership of land are consistent with progressive land laws,

there was undoubtedly an element of modernity in the rules governing the use and disposal of land in pre-colonial northern Ghana."

However, in determining the mechanisms of exploitation in the peasant mode of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana, and specifically in relating exploitation to the stagnation of peasant production forces, it is not sufficient to restrict ourselves to the question of ownership and control of the major means of production (in this case, land). For, that would amount to taking form for substance, since such an analysis might conclude that if there was no clear-cut division between those who owned the means of production and those who did not, then the society was classless and exploitation was non-existent.¹² Or, conversely, that if private tenure and individual land ownership existed (as they did in northern Ghana), these were necessarily consistent with or could have formed the impetus for the transformation of the productive forces.¹³ In any case, the emphasis in most peasant societies is not so much on land per se as on the right to a share of the product of land.¹⁴

In an attempt to understand the subsistence orientation of the peasant economy of pre-colonial northern Ghana, the critical questions to be asked are: who organized

production; that is, who set to work the means of production? Who was in control of the product and how was the product distributed? What role did exchange (intra household, regional and long-distance trade) play in distribution and redistribution? To what extent were the relations of production in the peasant economy being reproduced and how? In short, what was the social context in which exploitation occurred; that is, the constraints and obligations associated with the extraction of subsistence surpluses in pre-colonial northern Ghana?

Pre-colonial northern Ghana was essentially a lineage society in which the contours of social life and, in particular, the essential units of production and reproduction were built around the household consisting of individuals relating to each other on the basis of real or fictional kinship. Among the Dagomba in northern Ghana, the household (yili) was and continues to be made up of two or more men, related agnatically with their wives and other dependents to form the minimal lineage."

As a corporate body for economic and social functions, the household (yili) was associated with a complex web of exchanges on the basis of a sexual division of labour and a division relating to social age. In its most protracted guise, the household embraced sons, clients,

and even slaves in household activities.¹⁶ The most senior male acted as the household head (*yili yidana*) and, in this capacity, exercised authority in such matters as the allocation of agricultural work, negotiations over marriage and prayer to the ancestors.¹⁷ Hence, the organizers of production, and subsequently the ones who determined the means and direction of production - when to farm, how farm work was allocated, what crops were produced, and above all, the relative proportion of yields consumed, stored or traded - were the male elders of the patrilineal lineage.¹⁸

To fully understand the social dimensions of exploitation and the extent of primitive accumulation in the peasant economy of pre-colonial northern Ghana, it is necessary to examine how agricultural surplus was appropriated within the household and the role household heads played in this process. In general, appropriation means to attach something as possession; and, in the specific sense, means to make private property of something. In both senses, it implies a process of extraction and, in turn, a differentiation between 'extractors' and 'extractees'.¹⁹

Although the social hierarchy within the family producing unit based on social age and gender appeared to foster the collective communal appropriation of surplus

labour/product,²⁰ a closer scrutiny reveals some indications of private appropriation. The hierarchy in the family unit relied on positions of anteriority. The 'first ones', the elders, were regarded as those to whom the seed and subsistence goods were owed. They controlled access to all lineage or family land by right of seniority and they had what amounted to full usufructuary rights. Thus the elders could use their discretion to dispose of all crops grown by co-operative family labour.²¹

The significance of this incipient private appropriation can be understood only by examining the social context in which it prevailed. The concentration of all household produce in the hands of the elders stemmed from the prominence that accumulation, storage, organized and managed distribution assumed in the erratic agricultural cycle in pre-colonial northern Ghana. The long non-productive dry season, and the delayed production resulting from the investment of human energy on land increased the chances of food shortages. Food storage and managed distribution thus became important functions for food security. In maintaining the production/consumption balance, it was the elders who determined the explicit and implicit norms governing the way in which the total product was allocated among the members of the household. Concomitantly, the elders were at the centre of inter-

household redistribution of peasant surpluses involving the two-fold transfer or directional movement of products from one individual or household to another. It was through this complex process of distribution and redistribution that the elders allocated surplus products by determining who got what, when and how in order to secure household subsistence and the labour reproduction needs of the producers themselves.

A complete picture of the social obligations associated with the peasant mode of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana (that is, the combination of the forces of production and their relational effects) cannot be fully understood without reference to the process of reproduction of the household relations of production. Reproduction involves not only the (re)generation of the means of production (labour in particular), but also the system of social relations that engender the (re)generation process. In reference to the first process, O'Laughlin has argued that

...since the means of production, land and tools are acquired through membership of the household or by individual appropriation, the reproduction of the household depends primarily on the biological reproduction of the labour force."

The biological reproduction of labour - indeed, of all members of the production unit in pre-colonial northern Ghana - depended on the circulation of people, particularly

on matrimonial exchanges between and among lineages. In this regard, it is important to examine the practice of circulation of women, and the control of this system by the elders in order to understand fully the reproduction process in the traditional society.

Corresponding to their control of farmlands, the labour and produce of their dependents, elders within the *mino* lineages (households, *yili*) in northern Ghana also had juridical and ritual responsibilities for the junior members of their lineages. Formally, the elders had the decisive voice in all marriage transactions of their lineages, including the right to dispose of all girls in marriage. Throughout northern Ghana, matrimonial exchanges involved the exaction by elders of fairly substantial bride prices, usually in cattle, but also involving cash payments and in-kind payments such as prescribed free labour on in-laws' farms.²³ Elders were responsible for the marriage payments and other related expenses for their sons' wives and consequently, they received the payments from prospective suitors for their daughters.²⁴ While in theory these payments and receipts left no net material benefit for the elders, their centrality in the process perpetuated elder dominance in the household relations of production.

In the Gogan society of northern Togo (an area which formed part of pre-colonial northern Ghana) Philip Rey illustrated the extent to which the elders' monopoly over marriage was maintained. Rey observed that, generally, women were concentrated in the eldest of group siblings born of the senior wife of a man. The younger brothers in the lineage could only marry when the eldest daughter of their eldest brother reached puberty; that is, ideally, when the lineage was sure to have a woman ready to be exchanged. Thus, there was (for the younger brothers), a minimum of fifteen years wait in relation to the older brothers' marriage.²⁵ Hence, all exchanges of women with other lineages, clans or tribes were controlled by a small group of elders.

The pivotal and exclusive role that elders played in matrimonial exchanges and their control over the means of reproduction had important implications for the maintenance of the subsistence equilibrium in the traditional peasant society of northern Ghana. The long wait associated with the marriage process meant that very few non-productive members, especially children, were introduced into the system to put household subsistence at risk. Simultaneously, people remained long enough in the productive labour force, as fewer lineage males were likely

to become elders and thereby to rise to non-productive positions.

Thus, the stratification of the traditional northern Ghanaian society into elders and juniors resulted in a situation where the individual producer remained subordinated to the corporate household, where wealth remained submerged in status and where status resided solely with the elders. In this context, social relations of production were encapsulated in patron-client networks and familial, clan, and ethnic loyalties, and the dominant position of the elder precluded the private appropriation of peasant surpluses. Indeed, Meillassoux has argued that the power and privilege accruing to male elders should not be seen as those of class per se since those powers and privileges were acquired by virtue of the elders' control over the means of reproduction - food and women - not through the control over the means of production. Although Meillassoux conceded that juniors and male siblings were exploited by elders, he felt that exploitation on the basis of age and sex could not make a class society.²⁶ In effect, exploitation in traditional northern Ghanaian society was experienced socially as a pattern of moral rights and expectations among members of the peasant household, irrespective of status.²⁷

While we have seen that the peasant social formation of pre-colonial northern Ghana was not a homogeneous entity as is usually supposed of traditional societies," what remains to be demonstrated is why the subsistence orientation prevailed over tendencies towards accumulation and further development of peasant productive forces. In other words, why did the so-called dominant groups of elders not promote the further development of peasant productive forces and generate greater productivity; after all, this would have meant more surplus for them.

To answer this question, it is necessary to consider two related aspects of the social relations of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana: first, the analysis must go beyond the household production unit to include the social connection between the mode of production within the household and the relations of production constituting the entire peasant socio-economic structure of pre-colonial northern Ghana. Second, it must transcend the mere stratification of social groups at the level of production to include the relevance of these groups at the level of the state. As Shanin noted,

... changes in the peasantry have been determined (or at least triggered off) by the impact of non-peasant sections of the society, a situation which can be explained both by the character of the peasant social structure ... and by the very fact of peasant domination by powerful outsiders."

Let us first examine the connection between the household and the wider economy around it.

The household as a production unit constituted only part of a wider circulation of goods and services. The boundaries of this circulation in the totality of the peasant economy of pre-colonial northern Ghana extended beyond the household and into the production and marketing of other non-agricultural products. During non-productive periods of the agricultural cycle, other 'dry season' occupations prevailed. The rearing of livestock, craft work and cottage industries and (what Meillassoux described as) the economy of immediate return - fishing, hunting and gathering - all combined to foster a complex web of social relations of production in the entire peasant economy.¹⁰ These then formed the basis of inter-household and regional exchanges of subsistence goods including non-agricultural products.

While the elders were central to the production, distribution and redistribution of agricultural surplus within the household unit of production, they were not alone in the overall production and exchange relations external to the household and village production units. The production of crafts, ornaments and other cottage industrial produce such as seed oil was undertaken mainly by women who traded

their specialised wares for other subsistence needs like cloth, earthenware pots and pans, and gold and copper trinkets from other areas. Similarly, the prevalence of pastoralism with its requirements for extensive long-distance grazing not only removed livestock from the direct control of elders, it also secured the pre-eminence of nomadic groups such as the Fulani from northern Nigeria in the social relations of production external to the household. These other dimensions of the traditional peasant economy fostered structural articulations between the household producing units and other units or forms of production in the process of securing household subsistence.

On the whole, the inter-household, inter-clan and inter-village interactions among peasants - on the level of surplus product exchange or the exchange of women and tributes - were predicated on the fusion of elders into a politico-ideological mode of domination. This domination is based on

... the logical gradation of social organization from the productive unit, which generates the authority of the elder, to the reproductive cell, which grows from this authority on the basis of its capacity to ensure the reproductive cycle. Unlike the productive cycle, the latter is not self-sufficient. In both cases nevertheless, authority rests on the control of the means of human reproduction: subsistence ...

Hence, although the economic structure of the peasant society directed behaviour in support of a subsistence orientation, the social reproduction of the community was also a political endeavour." Therefore, the rules governing the household's relations with the wider economy required some form of mediation, a role which was assumed first by the fusion of elders, and subsequently, by the establishment of centralized states throughout pre-colonial northern Ghana.

Institutionalization of Power and the Peasantry

Although the history of the emergence of pre-colonial kingdoms/states in northern Ghana remains opaque, the little information available suggests that the conquest of the sedentary and acephalous agricultural communities and the establishment of centralised states by invading horsemen from north Africa around the fifteenth century did not change the basic structure of household production. Rather, the establishment of the kingdoms simply grafted onto existing household relations another level of authority over the allocation of subsistence surpluses: the nobility." By the late nineteenth century (the period of colonial contact), an organized and mature system of state structures had been in place in northern Ghana for approximately four

centuries. As seen in figure 2, four major Kingdoms occupied the territorial landscape of what is today known as the northern region of Ghana. These were the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Nanumba, and Gonja Kingdoms. All these kingdoms, without exception, were established by conquest.

FIGURE 2

Northern Ghana: Approximate Location of the Four Prominent Pre-Colonial Kingdoms and their Traditional Capitals

Source: Adapted from Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana (London: Longman, 1979), p. 21.

0 50 MILES

In the case of Dagomba, conquest proceeded in two phases. First, the western half of the kingdom was secured by the invading Dagomba calvary (known in Dagomba mythology as 'red hunters') who killed or removed incumbents of the only known indigenous authority, the tengdana, and replaced them with members of the royal dynasty or captains of the army. This led to the establishment of a series of chiefdoms including Karaga, Miong and Sunsong (headed by relatives of the royal dynasty); and two non-royal chiefdoms - Tolon and Kumbungu."

The significance of this first phase in the establishment of Dagomba state power was that it represented an effective usurpation of the powers and functions of the traditional earth priests, without completely abolishing the institution. Conquest secured for the new rulers ultimate jurisdiction over the allocation of land and, by implication, control over the subsistence surplus of household production units.

The second phase of the establishment of the Dagomba kingdom and the consequent creation of the kingdom's eastern outposts of Napkali and Zabzugu was occasioned by the defeat of the largely nomadic and acephalous Konkomba to the east." Here again, the establishment of divisional chiefs over previously stateless sedentary people had the

effect of securing military preponderance and socio-economic control of the new 'captive' people, a fact which centuries later would form the basis of peasant revolts as will be demonstrated in chapter four.

By the close of the fifteenth century and beyond, the Dagomba kingdom had evolved into a distinct territorial entity, vesting its sovereignty in the 'Ya-Na' (paramount chief of the Dagomba resident in Yendi, the traditional capital). The kingdom had a pyramidal structure starting at the base with small villages, each having a chief, a collection of which formed a division with a divisional chief and, ultimately, the paramount chief who was commander of the army and the highest judicial authority with powers to appoint chiefs, state functionaries and elders.

A comparable process of conquest characterized the establishment of the Gonja, Nanumba, and Mamprusi kingdoms; and they, in turn, established highly centralized state structures over people who were previously stateless.³⁶ The significance of conquest in the establishment of these political kingdoms was that it accentuated and made class domination more explicit than the hitherto incipient manifestations of class distinctions within the lineage/household producing units.

In Dagomba, conquest resulted in the imposition of a ruling class upon the indigenous population which became a commoner estate known as 'dagbandaba' or the 'black dagomba'. With the notable exception of the elders and a few minor chieftaincies held by the descendants of the indigenous earth priests, political office was monopolised by the more Islamized descendants of the invaders. The three main provincial pillars of the kingdom - Karaga, Miong, and Savelugu - were ruled by royal dukes, while other descendants of the invaders became divisional chiefs, captains of the army, advisors to chiefs and record keepers in the chiefs' courts. By contrast, the commoner estates were restricted to agricultural production, thereby constituting the productive labour force in the kingdom.

The Gonja kingdom had an even more elaborate class structure than the Dagomba. Three social groups: the rulers (Ngbanye); the pagan commoners (Nyamesi); and the local muslim community (Karamo - comprising the priesthood and the congregation) existed in Gonja.³⁷ The ruling estate formed one distinct unit of unilineal descent with both its male and female members regarding themselves as descendants of the conquering hero, 'Ndewura-Japka' in Gonja mythology. The commoner class, on the other hand, formed specific tribal designations - the Vagallas, Safalbas and Angas - under the dynastic tutelage of the 'Ngbanya' for whom they

were simply a residual category of peasants and farm workers ineligible for chieftainship."

The establishment of formalised state structures or kingdoms in pre-colonial northern Ghana" thus represented a decisive moment in the evolution of social class distinctions on the basis of non-producer rulers on the one hand and producer-subjects on the other. These distinctions transcended the earlier notions of implicit classes within households. The new power structures were no longer congruous with the older patterns of authority based on age and sex; they represented a wider measure of economic, social and political domination within sovereign territories.

What effect did this shift in class formation have on the character of peasant production, in particular on the nature of peasant surplus appropriation and capital accumulation? First, the change did not result in the destruction of the existing forms of peasant production and reproduction, nor did it result in any significant change in the social obligations of maintaining household subsistence equilibrium associated with elder initiatives within the peasant society. The new rulers were simply grafted onto pre-existing forms, as the institutionalization and consolidation of power in the kingdoms relied on the

relations of production that characterized the household and lineage production units. The elders continued to serve as the pillars of social and political control at the level of production. Since at their very basis all the kingdoms retained the patrilineal system of kinship, the household, family, or lineage relations remained intact. Within the lineage, clan, or village, social hierarchy still relied on positions of anteriority, as did the succession to high office (even within the exclusive ruling groups). In all the kingdoms of pre-colonial northern Ghana, inheritance by patriarchal primogeniture and the sexual dominance by patriarchy were (and still are) prevalent features such that promotion and competition for office were limited by one rule: "that no man could rise higher than his own father".⁴⁰

Despite the partial disintegration of earlier community forms during the conquest phase, the new social order which emerged with the establishment of the kingdoms throughout northern Ghana also retained the position of the earthpriest (tengdana). Although most of its incumbents were replaced by new appointees and land was nominally vested in the new chiefs and ultimately with the paramountcy, day-to-day control and allocation of land for agricultural purposes still resided with the tengdana. He still demanded and was given a tithe by prospective land users with which he acquired sheep for sacrifice to the

ancestors - the so-called spirits of the land. Thus, while the elders ensured social and economic control at the household level, the tengdana fostered clan control at the political and ideological levels.

In this role, the tengdana's office was respected and regarded as independent from the paramountcy, divisional and village chieftaincies. There was thus a division of labour between the political office of the chief supported by elders in-council on the one hand, and the land-lordship and labour control functions of the tengdana and lineage heads on the other. In fact, at the village level, lineage heads and the tengdana were the most effective mechanisms for securing and maintaining consent among the conquered peoples initially, and subsequently served to perpetuate domination by the entire ruling group (including the conquerors).

Beyond the village level, however, the conduct of inter-village and inter-divisional political and administrative affairs, up to the administration of the kingdoms, required a higher level of compliance and consent. Although this compliance was secured by the position or institution of the chief (from village level to the paramountcy). it was nevertheless effectively organized by a coalescence of lineage heads, tengdana and chiefs. The

principal sanction of the rulers' rights and prerogatives and of the authority exercised by their subordinate chiefs was the command of organized force. But while the monopoly of force was crucial for the conquest phase of the kingdoms, the chiefs did not merely rely on force to exercise their rule. Rather, they were perceived as the axis of all the political relations in the society, the symbol of social unity and exclusiveness, and the embodiment of social values.⁴¹

The unifying role that the nobility played in pre-colonial northern Ghana had both political and economic ramifications for the peasant social formation. Politically, the acceptance and incorporation of the institution of the *tengdana* into the ruling groups of the northern kingdoms constituted an ideological unity which greatly enhanced the chiefly line's bid for political hegemony and strengthened its capacity as the governing hierarchy.

However, the dynamics of governance and the institutionalization of state power in pre-colonial northern Ghana transcended the mere coalescence of dominant groups; it involved the effective separation and relative importance attached to 'ruling' group functions as opposed to the 'production' functions of the subjects. The reification of

the chiefs' role was premised on the belief that the services they rendered were more important than those performed by the direct producers. This belief was reinforced by the chiefs' mystical powers which derived from invisible forces; that is, their ability to intercede with spirits in favour of society. Thus, in the balance of the services exchanged between the ruling groups and the subjects, those rendered by the chiefs appeared all the more fundamental for being 'imaginary', while those rendered by the dominated appeared all the more trivial for being more visible, more material, and concerned only with means available to all for influencing the reproduction of society.⁴⁷ It was this relative importance attached to the services rendered by the chiefs which enlisted the consent, either passive or active, of those on whose behalf they were performed.

Not all the services rendered by the dominant groups in the pre-colonial states were illusory or even invisible. The nobility performed economic functions as well. As noted earlier, the elders' and tengdanas' role in organizing production, appropriating and then redistributing peasant surpluses at the family and lineage levels sustained their positions of authority both materially and socially. Concomitantly, the chiefly line; indeed, the entire ruling group, did not just consist of royal monarchs

who derived their powers from the divine. They also engaged in the appropriation and subsequent redistribution of subsistence surpluses in the same way as did the elders and tengdana. As well, the chiefs were planters who organized and supervised communal labour, including slave labour, for agricultural production.

The elaborate superstructure of the pre-colonial kingdoms was sustained in part by the rudimentary forms of surplus appropriation that the ruling groups derived from their subject peasant producers. For instance, the principal resources which the Dagomba ruling class required from their subjects were foodstuff and manpower. Subjects were required to pay tribute in-kind to the paramount chief (Ya-Na) and to divisional and village chiefs. This regular tribute, consisting of a load of yams, cereals and livestock, was paid by each farmer at each of the five yearly festivals in Dagbon. Additionally, on every Friday, each village headman or elder was required to send to his superior (usually a divisional chief), a 'guinea fowl' or chicken and a bundle of yams."

In order to work the chief's farms, free labour was required periodically from subjects under the jurisdiction of the chief. This phenomenon was most prevalent among the Nanumba and the Gonja. The Nanumba, for

instance, required compulsory labour from Konkomba peasants who were regarded as settler-farmers in the area with no juridical access to land except for that which was provided on usufructuary terms by their hosts, the Nanumba nobility. Similarly, the Gonja nobility required a prescribed number of days' labour from the subject groups of peasants like the Vagalla. This kind of feudal tenancy was so widespread that the prominence, wealth and power of the chief in northern Ghana were expressed by the size of his farm(s) which, in turn, was a reflection of the number of his 'free' work force.

Clearly then, the pre-colonial state in northern Ghana did participate in agricultural production, albeit to a limited extent, and did participate in the process of appropriating surplus from the already produced stock of peasant surpluses, but only as part of a wider network of dominant social forces including the elders and tengdana.⁴ Thus, the peasant producers of pre-colonial northern Ghana were subjected to no less than three levels of surplus appropriation: the nobility as represented by chiefs; the tengdana; and the elders. Why then did these dominant social groups not preside over the transformation of peasant forces of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the impact

that primitive accumulation had on an already marginal stock of peasant surplus production in the region.

On the one hand, not enough surplus was concentrated in the hands of any one of the social groups who presided over peasant surpluses to enable reinvestment into cost saving and production maximising devices that could have changed and possibly transformed peasant household relations of production." In any case, since the principal cost associated with the production of subsistence goods was labour and that was easily obtained at no cost within the family, there was no impetus for seeking cost saving alternatives to labour.

On the other hand, tendencies towards transformation of the peasant social formation were precluded, as discussed above, by the social obligations associated with the use to which each level applied its appropriated surplus. At the level of the chiefs, the obligation was to ensure a widespread distribution of subsistence goods across the different ecological zones within their jurisdiction. This function was critical for an area such as the arid north-east which was often unable to generate subsistence surpluses to sustain the relatively longer non-productive seasons. The chiefly line thus provided mechanisms for mobilizing communal labour for such

areas in order to complete cultivation tasks in the short period available and, subsequently, initiated mutual support mechanisms for supplying food to food-starved areas.

But if the limits of peasant transformation in pre-colonial northern Ghana were set by the pursuit of subsistence security as opposed to accumulation, the flourishing long-distance trade in the region for which such cosmopolitan trade terminals of Salaga, Yendi, Kintampo and Atebubu were famous," did little to foster an 'external' impetus for peasant transformation. There were several reasons why long-distance trade had little bearing on the status of the peasant mode of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana.

First, the complex networks of inter-regional exchanges which characterized long-distance trade were essentially multilateral trade relations which supplemented the subsistence needs of its participants rather than direct bilateral exchanges which were oriented towards specialization. These trade relations consisted of a system of exports and re-exports whereby the pastoralists of the Sahara-Savanna border traded livestock, dairy products and salt with the largely agrarian cultivators of the northern savanna in return for millet and cloth, while the region in turn traded livestock and salt with the peoples of Ashanti

to the south from whom they received kola nuts. In the absence of any specific bilateral exchanges, therefore, the possibility was rather limited of specialization in the production of a particular trade item, and consequently, of the development of comparative advantages in that item through the development of forces of production and technology.

Moreover, agricultural and food items, for which the northern savanna was most notable, did not feature prominently in long-distance trade. Most food items produced in northern Ghana - vegetables, root crops, and most cereals - were bulky and perishable and therefore suitable mainly as subsistence items. The absence of efficient transport facilities and the underdevelopment of food storage and food processing facilities made trade in food items across long distances risky and limited. Also, the complementary production of similar food items in most regions of the savannah further eroded the likelihood of a wide scale market for specific food items. The only agricultural commodity which received relatively wider circulation in long-distance trade was that of cattle and other livestock. However, only a small proportion of the herd was sold, since cattle and livestock represented not merely consumption items, but primarily the peasant society's main stock of capital.⁶⁷

In spite of the primary subsistence orientation of long-distance trade in food and other agricultural commodities, the simple fact that trade flourished in the region meant that significant profits were made. The question then is, why did capital formation from trade not provide the impetus for greater investments in agriculture? Capital formation from long-distance trade occurred at two levels: the professional merchants who engaged directly in trade; and the state (in this case, the kingdoms of pre-colonial northern Ghana) who controlled the trade routes.

The complex exchanges which characterized long-distance trade were presided over by Duala and Hausa merchants to the south-east and north-west of northern Ghana respectively. These highly specialized and substantial traders had no direct control over the production of the goods they handled. They simply bought and resold goods, taking advantage of the price differences from region to region. The fact that these merchants were not natives of northern Ghana also meant that most of their capital formation had no bearing on the region, nor was it vertically integrated into the region's agricultural production process. By contrast, the trading enterprises which emerged tended to be horizontal in that they set up a network of trading branches along trade routes, of which

hardly any engaged in the financing or direct participation in the production of agricultural staples for export.⁴⁸

While merchant capital formation was unconnected to and alienated from peasant productive activities in pre-colonial northern Ghana, the second level of capital formation through long-distance trade - the state - was rooted within northern Ghanaian society. The profits accruing to the chiefly line in the four kingdoms which ruled over pre-colonial northern Ghana came not so much from their direct participation in long distance trade, but rather from their mediatory, regulatory and policing role of that trade.⁴⁹ Since northern Ghana was used mainly as a trade route, the chiefly line derived substantial tax revenues from the huge trade caravans which criss-crossed the region in return for providing them with protection from slave raiders and looters. Thus the pre-colonial states were simply entrépot states, and while increased trade meant more revenue for them, it also required substantial expenditures in policing the trade routes and in providing welfare, shelter, storage and food for the merchants who were frequently on transit through their territories. Moreover, the fact that chiefs did not control actual trade - items traded, volumes, and direction of trade - meant that the state's capital formation from taxes on trade (as with its appropriation of peasant surpluses through tribute) was

a simple deduction from an already produced stock of profits.

Thus, important as trade revenues were to the state, the overall social obligations associated with the use to which revenue from trade was put (as was the case with subsistence goods appropriated from the peasants) by the ruling groups, limited the actual amount and effective power the state derived from trade revenues. Beyond these social obligations, therefore, Terray⁶ has demonstrated that trade revenues merely created opportunities for luxury consumption and self aggrandizement by the ruling groups rather than provide them with a basis for establishing more control and possibly transforming peasant production.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the peasant socio-economic structure of pre-colonial northern Ghana and suggested that while the peasant mode of production formed the basis for the evolution and institutionalization of pre-colonial state power, the matrix of powers in which production occurred set limits on the further development of peasant forces of production in the region. This conclusion concerns the peasant social relations which permitted the siphoning off of surplus labour/product within the

household, and from the commoner economy to support the pre-colonial state structures while maintaining the stability and basic subsistence orientation of peasant production.

In arriving at this conclusion, this chapter has argued that control over land and labour in pre-colonial northern Ghana, upon which surplus extraction ultimately rested, formed the material and ideological basis for the exercise of state power; that is to say that, those relations of effective power over persons and productive forces, translated into power relations at the level of the state. Yet neither the state nor any of the social groups which constituted it (the elders, and the land owning tengdana) was inclined to engender a process of transformation in the peasant mode of production.

It has been argued that this disinclination towards accumulation and transformation was the outcome of social and cultural obligations which assigned priority to the maintenance of subsistence security on dominant elements of the peasant society. Similarly, it has been argued that the prospect for 'external' transformation of the peasant mode of production as a result of capital formation from long-distance trade failed to materialize in northern Ghana because capital formation from trade was unconnected to

peasant production activities in pre-colonial northern Ghana.

The analysis here has focused on the genesis of peasant/state relations in the pre-colonial era. However, an equally profound aspect of peasant/state relations in the region was determined by colonial domination in the marginalization of peasant productive capacity in the region. Therefore, the next chapter is devoted to a comparable analysis of the peasantry and the state in northern Ghana during the colonial era.

Footnotes

1. Shepherd has detailed several incidents of serious food shortages in northern Ghana (especially in the densely populated north-east) dating as far back as 1912, and recurring in 1945, 1946, 1974, and 1977. See Andrew Shepherd, "Farming and drought in the north-east," West Africa, # 3157 (16 January 1978), pp. 96-98; and also Cyril Daddieh, "The Political Economy of Food and Agriculture: A Study of the Coconut Industry in Nzima, Ghana," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 1984), pp. 5-8.
2. Bruce Berman, "The Concept of 'Articulation' and the Political Economy of Colonialism," Canadian Journal of African Studies, 18, 2 (1984), p. 408.
3. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production," in Peter Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein, (eds.), Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, second edition (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), p. 107.
4. For details of agricultural practices in the northern savannah, see M. Fortes, "Food and the domestic economy of the Tallensi," Africa, 2, 52 (1936); Madeline Manoukian, Tribes of the Northern Territories (London: International Africa Institute, 1951), pp. 16-23; K.B. Dickson, "Background to the problems of agricultural development in northern Ghana," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 58, 4 (1968), especially pp. 688-691; and his "Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in Northern Ghana," Ghana Journal of Social Science, 2, 2 (1972).
5. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1985), op. cit., p. 107.
6. Wilfred Denis, "Capital and Agriculture: A Review of Marxist Problematics," Socialist Political Economy, 7 (Winter 1982), p. 137.
7. Manoukian, op. cit., p. 65.
8. R.B. Bening, "Indigenous concepts of boundaries and significance of administrative stations and boundaries in northern Ghana," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, 15 (1973a), p.1.
9. Loc. cit.
10. For detailed discussion of the pre-capitalist "rents" paid to the tengdana, see Manoukian, op. cit.

11. Anthony Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London: Longman Group Limited, 1973) p. 38.
12. Emile Vercrujisse, "Class formation in the peasant economy of southern Ghana," Review of African Political Economy, 15-16 (May - December 1979), p. 94.
13. For a critique of the analyses which equates private ownership and a "progressive" land law as a basis of the drive towards modernity, see Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 36-39.
14. This distinction led Scott to prefer the use of the term "resources" to denote all rural productive assets including land. See James Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, p. 6.
15. Manoukian, op. cit., pp. 25-28.
16. Once captured, slaves were fully integrated into societal activities in pre-colonial northern Ghana. They were allowed to marry into their host families and become household heads in their own right. Evidence from interviews of village elders in northern region.
17. Martin Staniland, The Lions of Dagbon: Political Changes in Northern Ghana (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 14-15.
18. Manoukian, op. cit., p. 27.
19. Scott Cook, "Beyond the Foreman: Towards a Revised Marxist Theory of Pre-Capitalist Formations and the Transition to Capitalism." The Journal of Peasant Studies, 4, 4 (July 1977), p. 330.
20. This Chayanovian view of the self-exploiting and self-appropriating peasant family producing unit has influenced a lot of analysis of early peasant social formations in Africa. For details of Chayanov's theory of the peasant 'family law of subsistence' see D. Thorner, B. Kerblay, and R.E.F. Smith, (editors), Chayanov A.V.: The Theory of Peasant Economies (Illinois: American Economic Association, 1966); and especially, B.Kerblay, "Chayanov and the Theory of Peasantry as a Specific Type of Economy," in T. Shanin (editor), Peasants and Peasant Studies (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971).
21. Claude Meillassoux, "The Social Organization of the Peasantry: The Economic Basis of Kinship," Journal of Peasant Studies, 1, 1 (1973), p. 83.

22. Bridget O'Laughlin, "Some problems in the conceptualization of non-capitalist relations of production," Critique of Anthropology, 2, 8 (Spring 1977), p. 12.

23. Bride price payments and obligations varied from place to place in northern Ghana. Among the Tallensi in the north-east, payment in cattle was more common; among the Dagomba, cash payments were more frequent; and among the Konkomba, in-kind payments of a prescribed number of days' work on in-laws' farms were the norm. The Konkomba case was more profound as newly born girls are committed to their prospective husbands immediately after birth. The fiancé then began to render his labour obligations to his in-laws until he married their daughter.

24. Manoukian, op. cit., p. 27.

25. Pierre Philippe Rey, "Class contradictions in lineage societies," Critique of Anthropology, 4, 13-14 (Summer 1979), p. 55.

26. Cited in O'Laughlin, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

27. Scott has detailed the moral obligations that elites had in traditional peasant societies and suggested that the "violation of these standards could be expected to provoke resentment and resistance..." See Scott (1976), op. cit., pp. 6-7.

28. This view has been applied by Meillassoux in his study of the social organization of the peasantry in West Africa. However, Mintz cautioned that "... unless 'the peasants' can be understood in terms of their internal differentiation along economic and other lines, it may appear that they consist entirely of the prey; in fact, some are commonly among the predators." Sidney Mintz, "A Note on the Definition of Peasantries," Journal of Peasant Studies, 1, 1(October 1973), p. 94.

29. Teodore Shanin, "Peasantry, Delineation of a Sociological Concept and a Field of Study," European Journal of Sociology XII, p. 298.

30. Meillassoux (1973), op. cit., pp. 82-83.

31. Meillassoux (1973), op. cit., p. 85.

32. Hyden suggested the contrary by arguing that in the traditional peasant society based on household production and inter-household exchanges, the state is not linked to the system of production as it is in other modes. According

to this view, the basic units of production are not only socially independent of each other, but also of the state. Thus the state played no necessary role in production, expanded reproduction or "stagnation" of peasant production. See Goran Hyden, No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 17-19.

33. For details on the establishment of kingdoms in northern Ghana, see Staniland (1975), op. cit.; M. Fortes, "The political system of the Tallensi of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," in M. Fortes and Evans Pritchard (editors), African Political Systems (London: Oxford University Press, 1940); A.A. Illiasu, "Asante's relations with Dagomba, 1740 - 1874," Ghana Journal of Social Science, 1, 2 (1971), pp. 54-62; and Yakubu Saaka, Local Government and Politics in Northern Ghana (Washington: University of America Press, 1978).

34. Staniland (1975), op. cit., p. 4.

35. Loc. cit.

36. For detailed discussion of the establishment of the Gonja Kingdom, see Saaka, op. cit.; and also Jack Goody, "The Over-Kingdom of Gonja," in Daryll Forde and P.M. Kaberry, West African Kingdoms in the nineteenth century (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

37. Saaka (1978), op. cit., pp. 7-13.

38. Ibid., p. 12; and also, Goody (1967) op. cit., p. 186.

39. The establishment of the other two northern Ghanaian kingdoms was similar to the Dagomba and Gonja. In the Mamprusi kingdom, the Tallensi were subjected to the Mamprusi nobility of 'Nayiri'; and in the Nanumba kingdom, the Konkomba were under the tutelage of the Nanumba nobility. Information provided through interviews in the areas in 1981 and 1984.

40. Staniland (1975), op. cit., p. 17.

41. Fortes and Pritchard, op. cit., p. 16.

42. Maurice Godeller, "Process of the formation, diversity and bases of the state," International Social Science Journal, XXXII, 4 (1980), p. 614.

43. Staniland, op. cit., p. 35. For details of the extent and dimensions of tribute payments to the ruling nobility in pre-colonial northern Ghana, see Phyllis Ferguson and Ivor

Wilks, "Chiefs constitutions and the British in northern Ghana," in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (editors), West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status Under Colonial Rule and Independence (New York: African Publishing Corporation, 1970), pp. 326-369.

44. This picture of the production dynamics and the system of primitive accumulation in pre-colonial northern Ghana (also observed by Bates in his study of production relations in pre-colonial West Africa) differs from Hyden's contention that in the traditional peasant society based on household production and inter-household exchanges, the state is not linked to the system of production as it is in other modes. For him, the basic units of production are not only socially independent of each other, but also of the state, hence the conclusion that the state played no necessary role in production nor, for that matter, in the expanded reproduction of the peasant social formation. Hyden (1983), op. cit., pp. 15-20. See also Robert Bates, Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially pp. 5-58.

45. In his analysis of the use to which subsistence surpluses are applied, Scott argues that "... social pressures within the precapitalist village had a certain redistributive effect: rich peasants were expected to be charitable, to sponsor more lavish celebrations, to help out temporarily indigent kin and neighbors, to give generously to local shrines and temples." Scott (1976), op. cit., p. 5.

46. For detailed descriptions of the centrality of northern Ghana to the pre-colonial long-distance trade system, see K.B. Dickson, "Trade Patterns in Northern Ghana at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century," Geographical Review, 56 (1966), pp. 416-431; and also, Nehemia Levtzion, "Salaga: A Nineteenth Century Trading Town in Ghana," Asian and African Studies Review, Volume ii, 1966, pp. 207-244.

47. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 42.

48. Hopkins has suggested that in at least one case where Duala merchant capital was used to finance blacksmiths in Southern Mali (the home location of the Duala), some specialization in technology did occur. Ibid., pp. 60-61.

49. It has been implied rather erroneously that the ruling groups in northern Ghana participated directly in long-distance trade, and that it was from this role rather than the surplus they appropriated from the peasants that the pre-colonial states acquired their stock of capital. See Staniland (1975), op. cit., pp. 34-35. Even in Ashanti where official trade was conducted by state functionaries called

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the Batafo, there was considerable restraint on this practice in favour of intensifying the state's taxation role to avoid risk. See Hopkins, op. cit., p. 64. There is no evidence of a comparable practice for northern Ghana.

50. Emmanuel Terray, "Long distance exchange and the formation of the state: the case of the Abren Kingdom of Gyaman," Economy and Society, 3, 3 (August 1974), pp. 322-324.

CHAPTER II

THE COLONIAL STATE AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF PEASANT AGRICULTURE IN NORTHERN GHANA

The events that led to the establishment of colonial rule in northern Ghana in 1902 resembled a replay of the conquest of pre-existing segmentary lineages in the region four centuries earlier. Much like the invading calvary from the north, the establishment of the colonial state in northern Ghana was marked by violence in subduing the centralized states/kingdoms and the peasantry over whom they ruled. Unlike the primordial states, however, the colonial state represented capitalist interests, and therefore had the potential of transforming the peasant economic structure of northern Ghana into capitalist agriculture.

This chapter is concerned with how and why the colonial state and capital did not perform the "historic mission" of supplanting the subsistence orientation of peasant agriculture in northern Ghana but instead marginalized, without transforming, the non-capitalist social formations of the region. In doing this, the chapter will examine the main instrument of colonial development policy the designation of northern Ghana as a labour reserve for the southern Ghanaian mines and plantations.

By examining colonial development policies in northern Ghana in relation to infrastructural development, land, education and agriculture, it will be suggested that the limited investment in the region was a function of the complex and contradictory tendencies of capitalist penetration in the periphery. This contradiction in the case of northern Ghana, was manifested by the interests of hegemonic fractions of capital - mining and finance capital - whose bid to maximize profits from their stock of earlier investments in southern Ghana influenced the colonial state to minimize investments and maintain the cheap labour regime in the region. This limited capitalist penetration in the region introduced a dialectic which, on the one hand, fostered the apparent preservation of the peasant economic structure at the level of household production, and on the other, removed some of the productive labour force through labour migration.

At the same time, the very incorporation of the region into the national colonial economy meant that peasant productivity was for the first time directed towards regional and national markets rather than exclusively local ones. Agrarian stagnation, then, focussed attention on the struggle over the distribution of peasant produce between subsistence needs and commercial possibilities in the

absence of a simultaneous expansion in productive capacity. To understand this dilemma between committing food to peasant subsistence needs or selling it to a wider national market, it is necessary to examine the establishment of the colonial state in northern Ghana.

Foundations of the Colonial State in Northern Ghana

The formation and consolidation of colonial state power in northern Ghana has significant ramifications for any discussion of agrarian stagnation in the region. The establishment of the colonial state resulted in the evolution of a truly regional economy, in that it brought together the hitherto independent kingdoms in the region. However, the process also involved a political restructuring which impaired the capacity of the peasant society to respond constructively to the increased demand for food nationally. The central role of village elders and chiefs in the maintenance of subsistence security was curtailed, and, once the centre was unable to hold its other appendages, the moral basis of the subsistence ethic was gradually eroded.¹

The colonial annexation of northern Ghana went through two phases: direct and indirect rule. The first phase lasting from 1896 to the mid-1920s, was that of

direct, often military rule.² This phase saw the systematic disintegration and suppression of the traditional authority and structure of the four prominent kingdoms in the region (Dagomba, Gonja, Nanumba, and Mamprusi). The use or the threat of the use of force, evoked largely through the stationing of several mobile detachments of the Gold Coast Regiment at strategic positions throughout the region, brought all the kingdoms into submission to British authority.³

The second phase of indirect rule lasted from the mid-1920s to 1951, when Ghana attained internal self-government status. This phase saw the rejuvenation, reconstitution, and incorporation of the traditional institutions and authorities as agents of the colonial state. An examination of these two phases of the consolidation of colonial authority in northern Ghana is necessary in order to understand the extent to which the colonial state turned the pre-existing modes of domination to its own advantage while simultaneously undermining the peasant economy's capacity to respond constructively to the challenge posed by its integration into a wider national economy. Let us first examine the administrative mechanism adopted by the colonial state.

After military conquest, the next effort to suppress pre-existing states and establish British rule in northern Ghana was the demarcation and superimposition of 'administrative' boundaries upon traditional ones (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Northern Ghana
Colonial Territorial Re-demarcation

Source: Adapted from Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana. London: Longman, 1979, p. 21.

The administrative districts that were created were intended primarily to establish social and political control and to maintain effective administration in the region by reorienting citizen allegiance away from the traditional rulers to the new sources of authority - British appointed District and Provincial Commissioners. The boundaries of these districts criss-crossed the international boundaries of the pre-colonial kingdoms (see figure 2). Attempts to make the two coincide led to conflicts among the traditional ruling groups, resulting in endless litigation and countless boundary disputes, some of them resulting in tribal skirmishes that disrupted the harmonious and co-operative relations then existing among the traditional kingdoms.⁴ These conflicts directed the energies of the ruling groups against each other and this allowed the British to appear as mediators in the ensuing local, clan and chieftaincy disputes.⁵ This mediator role, backed by the sanctions of the British constabulary and the Gold Coast Regiment, enhanced the legitimacy of the colonial state.

This legitimacy was justified by the perception that the traditional system was decadent and lacked rationality. The British pointed to the competitive process determining the succession to high office among the Dagomba, for example, as a source of instability in the traditional

system. This was pejoratively described as leading to 'succession disputes' which were regarded as aberrations, incompatible with good government and symptomatic of the imminent breakdown of traditional procedures. Hence, the colonial state set up arbitration procedures presided over by colonial political officials and attempts were made to restore supposedly traditional constitutional forms by prescribing rules for determining the succession to the high office of chief.⁶

The demarcation of administrative boundaries was closely followed by the creation of new administrative stations (towns) which became the nerve centres of colonial administration in northern Ghana. An increased emphasis on these new administrative centres led to their growth and development and to the concomitant decline of the traditional centres and, with them, the jurisdiction of the traditional rulers who occupied them. While new colonial administrative locations like Gambaga, Bawku, Bole, Zuarungu, Navrongo and Tamale grew in size and pre-eminence, Nalerigu, Nyanga, Yendi and Salaga (all traditional capitals and significant pre-colonial trade terminals) stagnated or declined.⁷

The subjugation of the chiefs and of the institution of chieftaincy was so intense that in 1928 the

chief commissioner for the southern province, A. W. Cardinall, observed that although Yendi (the traditional capital of Dagomba) had an elaborate system of nomination of chiefs, the persistent interference in its working by the colonial administration had brought about the virtual disintegration of traditional institutions and authority. Indeed, he concluded that, in reality, the colonial administration in that era was a direct one where chiefs were practically powerless, possessed no authority nor revenue, and tended to become "...mere 'sergeant- majors' through whom administration [could] address the rank and file." In the same year, J. A. Braimah, himself a chief and later a prominent northern politician, described the treatment accorded by the British to a previously powerful traditional ruler of Kpembe in the following terms:

The Kpembewura was addressed by the British officer as 'My Good Friend', but the treatment he got from him was worse than a slave. Practically every week, carriers were demanded to take loads to Kumasi, Tamale and Kintampo.... When carriers were required, the Kpembewura was made to sit in the sun until the number of men had been made up...

The suppression of the chiefs and of the traditional institutions in the establishment of direct colonial rule had devastating economic ramifications. The economic demise of the pre-colonial kingdoms began with the British defeat of the Ashanti in 1874. The British military

expeditions against the Ashanti and the Anglo-Ashanti wars themselves led to considerable disruption of the lucrative trade routes which had accounted for the strategic importance of such northern traditional centres as Yendi, Salaga and Kintampo. Lending military support to the Dagomba, Gonja and other kingdoms, the Ashanti had effectively policed the trans-Saharan trade routes, thereby protecting them from Moslem slave raiders, notably the Baabatu and Samori from North Africa.¹⁰ With the defeat of the Ashanti, however, the trade routes fell easy prey to raiders and looters. In order to make up for lost revenue, some divisional chiefs and armed gangs organized independent expeditions and raids to take advantage of the unprotected merchandise. These events made caravans insecure and consequently infrequent, thereby resulting in further loss of revenue and a decline in the influence of the chiefs.

An equally significant effect of the insecurity in trade routes, however, was that it allowed the colonial state to become the only source of protection. From the onset of colonial rule, trade began to take place within the framework of a national market rather than the discrete jurisdictions of the pre-colonial kingdoms; it was reoriented away from the hinterland whence it complemented subsistence and towards Europe; and European firms were now introduced to take advantage of trade profits.¹¹ These

shifts had profound consequences on the northern ruling groups' ability to sustain their social obligations of maintaining the subsistence balance of their respective societies

A government duty (caravan toll) was introduced to replace the levy previously charged by various chiefs on livestock and loads of kola nuts of the caravan traders. Such convoys were then offered an escort if they chose to pass through only British territory." The tariff was set at two shillings per head-load of merchandise, four shillings per donkey load, and a varied rate on livestock for sale or exchange: five shillings per horse; three shillings per cow; two shillings per donkey; and six shillings per head of sheep or goats." Thus, between 1900 and 1908, revenue from trade (caravan tolls and market stall fees) accruing to the colonial state in northern Ghana amounted to £85,411, representing approximately eighty-three per cent of total recorded revenue in the first eight years of colonial rule (as shown in Table 1).

TABLE 1

Colonial Internal Revenue in the Northern Territories
1900-1908 (In British Pounds).

Year	Caravan Tolls	Market Fees	Court Fees	Other Items	Total Revenue
1900	4,851	--	304	--	7,736
1901	3,716	245	338	3,025	7,325
1902	6,279	449	387	2,213	9,328
1903	8,903	441	401	2,146	11,891
1904	10,084	449	369	1,661	12,563
1905	11,131	550	403	1,333	13,417
1906	11,803	471	320	1,419	14,013
1907	15,852	470	323	1,454	18,099
1908	9,294	423	364	858	10,939
Total	81,913	3,498	3,209	14,109	102,729

Source: R.B. Bening, "Administration and Development in Northern Ghana," Ghana Social Science Journal, 4, 2 (November 1977), p. 69 (total by sector mine).

Apart from the loss of tax revenue from the caravan trade, the chiefs suffered an even more profound depreciation in their material basis of support as a result of the decline of their territorial sovereignty and the demise of their traditional capitals. As indicated earlier, domestic agricultural production and the tributary rent and free labour obligations that peasants provided for their rulers constituted the material basis (that is, the basis of subsistence surplus appropriation) of the traditional rulers. Once new colonial administrative centres were established, more people (all of them peasant farmers),

moved to the towns in the hope of finding better remunerative jobs. Although there is no conclusive data on the cumulative scale of the rural exodus which followed the creation of the new administrative centres, the outflow of the agricultural labour force from the rural sector created food shortages.¹⁴ In an attempt to find a solution to the emerging food crisis, the colonial officers shut down markets in traditional areas and ordered residents to use the new town as markets and to bring their commodities to the new administrative centres. The decline in agricultural production and in marketed produce in the rural areas inevitably meant less tribute and rent (in absolute terms) to the traditional ruling classes - elders, tengdana, and chiefs.¹⁵

The question that may arise here is: why did the apparent shortage of labour on peasant farms coupled with the increased demand for food from the new colonial administrative centres not give an impetus to the introduction of capital intensive means of food production among the peasant cultivators? Although the loss of labour did increase the availability of land per head in the region, land was already sufficiently abundant such that the loss of labour resulted in the reduction of extensive cultivation rather than the promotion of intensive cultivation of land. In any case, the introduction of

British currency and colonial tax obligations effectively decapitalized the peasants in northern Ghana to the point that they were in no position to take advantage of increased demand for food by increasing productivity through investing in capital intensive methods of cultivation.¹⁶

While the phase of colonial conquest in northern Ghana (direct rule) shattered the political unity and economic viability of the pre-existing traditional states, the second phase, which consolidated the colonial state on the basis of indirect rule, resurrected a semi-feudal structure that was built on a class alliance between traditional office holders and the European bureaucracy. Hinting at such a policy of indirect rule in northern Ghana in March 1921, the Governor, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, declared that the new policy in Ghana

must be to maintain any Paramount chiefs that exist and gradually absorb under these, any small communities scattered about. What we should aim at is that some day the Dagombas, Gonjas and Mamprusi should become strong native states. Each will have its own Public Works Department and carry on its own business with the Political Officer as a resident advisor. Each state will be more or less self-contained.¹⁷

Following Guggisberg's suggestions, a protracted debate occurred between the colonial state functionaries resident in the Northern Territories, who were described as

'die-hards', staunchly opposed to indirect rule, and the moderates (from the Governor's office in Accra), who were faithfully committed to the Lugardian philosophy of indirect rule. Eventually, the moderates triumphed when the administration of the Northern Territories was given to newly appointed officers from the colonial office in the south.¹⁸

Foremost among the factors which predisposed the colonial authorities to indirect rule in northern Ghana was financial expediency. The initiation of such a policy coincided with the 1930s depression and a retrenchment in the grants designated for the administration of British colonies. Hence, it was imperative to seek better cost-saving/income generating local alternatives. Moreover, twenty-five years of direct rule characterized by a systematic erosion of the authority and material basis of the traditional institutions had secured the stability and preponderance of the colonial state throughout the region. The shift to indirect rule was thus an essential mechanism to ensure financial solvency after colonial domination had been consolidated. These objectives were implicit in the legislative instruments used to initiate the policy.

The introduction in January 1932 of the 'Native Administrative Ordinance' was followed by orders to

constitute the Dagomba Native Authority with the 'Ya-Na' (Paramount Chief) and his council at the apex of thirteen subordinate native authorities representing the various divisional chiefs and elders of the erstwhile Dagomba kingdom.¹⁹ In the Gonja District, the main Native Authority was the 'Yabunwura' (Paramount Chief of Gonja) and his traditional council. Similarly, the five divisional districts of the pre-colonial Gonja kingdom were also constituted into sub-native authorities.²⁰ Under the Native Jurisdictions Ordinance, the Chief Commissioner was empowered to establish a tribunal for any native administrative area and to define its criminal and civil jurisdictions.²¹ The Native Treasuries Ordinance of 1932 also gave the Chief Commissioner the authority to establish treasuries in native administrations and to determine their sources of revenue. This led to the introduction of direct taxation in northern Ghana in 1936.²²

In theory, indirect rule was supposed to revitalize the pre-colonial kingdoms, constituting them as semi-autonomous monarchies with their own treasuries and modern governmental structures. The provincial unity of both the Dagomba and Gonja was based on the accepted principle of maintaining tribal areas intact with a view to encouraging development of native rule in as large a native state as possible. In practice, indirect rule amounted to

no more than a mechanism for more effective social, economic and political control of the people, a device introduced to consolidate the institutionalization of colonial power in the region.

Besides its administrative expediency, indirect rule had two profound yet contradictory effects on colonial northern Ghana. First, indirect rule bolstered the old rulers with resources - commissions from taxation, nominal control over judicial tribunals, and the services of 'Chiefs' Police' forces, so that as direct agents of the colonial state, traditional rulers now performed a dual role. Duncan Johnston, a Commissioner in the Northern territories during the 1930s, observed that:

...under indirect rule the Chiefs or Native Authorities are not independent rulers, they are the delegates of the Governor. The advice therefore of the Political Officers must be followed, although the chiefs will issue their own instructions to their divisional chiefs... everything must be done to redeem the chiefs and their people from practices which are degrading while cherishing at the same time all local associations and traditions which are good.

This policy of appearing to delegate powers to the native authorities while, in reality, reducing them to mere appendages of the colonial state underlined all indirect rule initiatives from revenue collection to the chiefs'

nominal role in the judicial tribunals. Ultimate authority resided with the colonial officials.

However, the chiefs could not be portrayed only as direct representatives of the colonial state, for such a perception would have undermined their legitimacy in the eyes of the people and hence their capacity to perform the functions of social and political control (and also of capital accumulation through taxation) for the colonial state. Therefore, the chiefs and traditional rulers also functioned as the legislative representatives of their people, articulating their interests in the regional legislative assembly. By 1948, of the sixteen members in the Northern Territories Council (the regional legislative body), thirteen were chiefs and only three were non-chiefs.²⁴ So, the chiefs were made direct state functionaries as well as the apparent representatives of their people.²⁵

This contradictory location of traditional rulers in the relations between the colonial state and society was at the core of the formation and consolidation of the colonial state in northern Ghana. However, the vigour with which the chiefs performed their duties to the colonial authorities diminished their capacity to fulfil their social obligations in maintaining subsistence stability.

Concomitantly, their nominal judicial and coercive powers made the chief's office an instrument to further colonial political and economic interests.

For this colonial mode of domination (characterized by the disintegration and subsequent incorporation of traditional authority) to be sustained and reproduced, a simultaneous process of incorporating the peasant economic structure of northern Ghana had to occur. This incorporation was fostered by the colonial labour policy which promoted the export of unskilled labour from the peasant economy of the region into the mines and plantations of southern Ghana. This policy was complemented, in turn, by few investments in agriculture, infrastructure, education and social services in northern Ghana. To understand the impetus for this uneven development in Ghana during the colonial era, it is necessary to examine the colonial development strategy towards northern Ghana.

Colonial Development Policy in Northern Ghana

The colonial incorporation of northern Ghana into the international capitalist system was not self-contained. Rather, it was part of the dialectic of capitalist transformation of Ghana which entailed the concentration of

investments in the export sectors of the colonial economy where they could yield higher returns, while utilizing cheap labour from northern Ghana." The *raison d'être* of colonial development policy in northern Ghana was thus to incorporate the region as a reservoir for the supply of this cheap unskilled labour." Therefore, any analysis of the changes in peasant social relations in colonial northern Ghana must begin with an examination of colonial labour policy.

The Colonial Labour Policy

Southern Ghana, with its abundant industrial raw materials and proximity to the sea, attracted most of the initial European investments in Ghana. The gold rush which brought mining companies scrambling to southern Ghana in the late nineteenth century also brought with it a demand for infrastructural developments - roads and railways - to service those mines and these required a lot of cheap, preferably unpaid labour." The mines themselves expanded at a meteoric rate. From 1898 to 1902, the annual value of gold exported averaged only £55,000; by 1905 it had risen to £597,000, and by 1907 to £1,130,000." As more shafts were sunk, labour shortages arose, particularly for the tedious and hazardous underground operations, and for road and rail constructions. Attempts to recruit labour for these jobs from the coastal regions and from Ashanti met with fierce

resistance, as workers from these areas could obtain more remunerative and less tedious work in rubber, palm oil and cocoa cultivation.³⁰ Hence, as early as 1905, the Tarkwa gold mine managers made their first request for labour from the northern territories and actual recruitment started in 1906. By 1917, an annual supply of approximately fifteen thousand northern laborers was being conscripted for work in the south.³¹ Disease, low wages, and cultural alienation combined to undermine morale among these conscripts. Soon, compulsion had to be introduced to facilitate the expanding conscription of labour for the mines and the ambitious public works programs of Governor Guggisberg in the 1920s.

One of the factors which facilitated the conscription and later migration of labour from north to south was the deliberate absence of educational opportunities in the region. The colonial policy on education was to promote as minimal an education as was necessary for the effective administration of the area and to limit the number of educated pupils "...to that which can readily be absorbed in employment at the end of the school career"³².

In the north, the opening of new schools and the training of skilled personnel that began in 1920, had to be halted by 1922/23 "owing to the necessity for rigid economy"

and to the fact that considerable expenses were incurred in the building of Achimota College in the south." This connection, between limiting educational opportunities in the north, while promoting educational development in the south, remote as it was, had further implications for the different sectoral needs of the 'export enclave' - a mass of unskilled laborers from the north, and a few semi-skilled and skilled workers from the south.

However, in spite of the general limitations on educational development in northern Ghana, the sons of chiefs and traditional rulers were selectively educated up to higher standards. This policy was intended to foster an alliance between the traditional rulers and the colonial bureaucracy, as well as to enhance the capacity of the traditional rulers to mobilize labour for communal projects, public works, and the mines. A slightly enlightened ruling group and a mass of illiterate and semi-literate unskilled people, appeared to present just the right combination for the sustenance of the colonial labour policy.

However, as the region was incorporated into the colonial cash economy, as taxes were introduced and consumer goods began to circulate, labour migration to the south ceased to be compulsory.³⁴ By 1945/46, seasonal and settler-labour from north to south had acquired a dynamic of

its own, with laborers oscillating between the north and their places of employment in the south as shown in table 2.

TABLE 2

Annual Movements of Laborers Over Volta Ferries:
1937 - 1940; 1945 - 1952; and 1954 (in 000's)

Year	Northbound	Southbound
1937	nil	34.5
1938	nil	34.6
1939	nil	47.1
1940	nil	25.6
1945	46.6	84.6
1946	91.4	79.7
1947	80.5	84.6
1948	108.8	117.7
1949	160.0	165.8
1950	179.3	158.3
1951	187.3	171.2
1952	196.1	333.4
1954	286.6	259.6

Source: Adapted from C.F. Menezes, "Agricultural Migration and Rural Development in Ghana," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1966, p. 96.

While the prime motivation for labour recruitment from the north was to secure a labour force for the mines and government infrastructural projects, northerners also served to staff police forces and the army. By August 1914, the Gold Coast Regiment consisted almost entirely of men from northern Ghana whose service was said to entail "...not so great a sacrifice upon them as it may have on the natives of the Gold Coast and Ashanti."

What made the north particularly susceptible to the recurrent demands for unskilled labour, and how was this labour reservoir regime sustained? One of the most popular justifications for the conscription and inducement of labour migration from the north was the claim that the region lacked natural resources which could profitably retain an excessive labour force.³⁶ Using the natural resources argument, as early as 1899, Governor Hodgson declared that the northern Territories

...as far as is known is destitute of mineral wealth, it is destitute of valuable timbers, and does not produce either rubber or kola nuts or indeed any product of trade value...for the present I therefore cannot too strongly urge the employment of all the available resources of the Government upon the development of the country to the south of the Kintampo...I would not at present spend upon the northern territories...a single penny more than it is absolutely necessary for their suitable administration and, the encouragement of the transit trade.

The perception of lack of natural resources in northern Ghana was untenable because, at the same time as the colonial officials were down-playing the resource value of northern Ghana, sizeable deposits of gold and other minerals had been sighted in the north-east around Nangodi; and in the north-west around Wa.³⁹ Similarly, cotton, sheabutter, cattle and groundnut had also been demonstrated

to have profitable potential throughout northern Ghana." Thus in considering the direction of colonial development policy in northern Ghana, it would be erroneous to suggest that the purposeful neglect of the region was due to a lack of natural resources. Rather the neglect of northern Ghana was occasioned by struggles within the colonial state. To understand these struggles, it is necessary to analyze the institutional character of the colonial state, and in particular, the configuration of interests that shaped the state's overall development policy towards northern Ghana.

The Colonial State and Uneven Development I: Infrastructure and Investments

One of the main issues around which different fractions of capital exercised their influence on the colonial state was the prospect of developing the physical infrastructure of northern Ghana. The exploitation of gold and other rich minerals, along with the encouragement of the cultivation of raw materials like cocoa, timber and palm oil in the south, led to the division of the Gold Coast colony into an export enclave consisting of the colony proper and Ashanti; and the Protectorate of Northern Territories which serviced the export economy with cheap labour. The colonial state in Ghana brought together three significant interest groups: business (including mining and commercial interests); administrative (sectoral professionals such as

engineers and agriculturalists and politicians); and traditional leaders and chiefs in southern Ghana. However, the regional interests of northern Ghana had no institutional representation in the colonial state. The colonial legislative and executive councils, which were responsible for making and implementing national development policies, did not include the Northern Territories which had its own legislative council with limited powers of appropriation and certainly limited investment resources.⁴⁰ This meant that neither the interests of the traditional northern ruling groups nor those of the colonial administrators in northern Ghana were directly represented in national policy making.

At the same time, within the national legislature and the executive councils in Accra, the struggle over colonial development policy for northern Ghana pitted large capitals against small ones. Thus, the big mining conglomerates (Ashanti Goldfields Corporation and Lohnro) and the commercial firms involved in the export of cocoa, shipping and insurance, with substantial investments in the export-oriented economy of southern Ghana, were opposed to any investments in the north.⁴¹ One of the main concerns of those large capitals with major investments in southern mines was the protection of a cheap and abundant labour supply. Significant investment in northern Ghana was

perceived by these interests as potentially undermining the basis of their capital accumulation, since the price of northern labour would rise if there were new employment opportunities in that region. On the other hand, small mineral prospecting companies (like the Wa Syndicate Company Limited),⁴² agricultural interests (like the British Cotton Growers' Association) and some commercial retailing interests, particularly the United African Company (UAC) were supportive of more investment in northern Ghana.

The struggle between large and small capitals over the direction of development policies in northern Ghana was manifested most noticeably in the debate over the extension of railway lines to northern Ghana. The significance of an effective and cheap transport network for northern Ghanaian trade and agriculture was recognized by some British interests, specifically, the UAC and the British Cotton Growers Association. In a letter to the colonial office in London in June 1929, the UAC argued that the construction of railways in the north would make possible the increased export of valuable products like shea-nuts and cotton, and would allow the greater importation of manufactured goods from Great Britain.⁴³ The mining concerns in the south, however, opposed such a venture on the grounds that the high cost of further railway development in the country might be passed on to them through higher taxes, thereby reducing

their profit margin. Implicit in their objections was also their concern that increased economic activity, arising from cheaper transport to the north, might undermine the flow of labour to the mines and public works in the south.⁴⁴

Aside from the more obvious reasons, the vigour with which the big mining companies opposed the extension of railways to northern Ghana and the fact that the railway project was shelved by the colonial state, can be explained in terms of the consequences of certain initial choices that had been made by the colonial administration. For example, the decision to construct extensive infrastructure to serve mining and cocoa interests in the south and to provide southern mines with cheap labour from the north produced certain vested interests among local and foreign capitals which meant that subsequent decisions in favour of northern Ghana became much more unlikely.⁴⁵

Thus, the colonial state's strong support for southern Ghana's metropolitan and local business interests contrasted sharply with its lukewarm attitude towards potential investors in the north. Moreover, one of the mechanisms used to obstruct investments in the north was the nationalization of northern lands by the colonial authorities. Let us turn now to the colonial land policy in northern Ghana.

The Colonial State and Uneven Development II: The Land Policy

Responding to demands by relatively small British mineral prospecting companies (among them the Wa syndicate Limited of London) to prospect for gold in northern Ghana, the colonial regime (then only four years old under Governor Matthew Nathan) enacted the Mineral Rights Ordinance of 1904.⁴⁶ This legislation laid the basis for all successive land policies in the region. A section of the legislation dealing with the granting of concessions had two profound implications for the level and direction of investments in the north.

First, the government demanded high fees from holders of mining concessions in its bid to raise revenues quickly.⁴⁷ These high fees and the absence of government grants-in-aid for mineral prospecting in the north (as opposed to extensive tax and grant incentives to mining companies in the south) were sources of frustration for the relatively small mining companies seeking to operate in the north and effectively discouraged them from proceeding with their investment plans.⁴⁸

Second, the colonial land policy in northern Ghana differed materially from that in the south. Anticipating

the benefits from increased land values due to the gold rush in southern Ghana in the late nineteenth century, the southern chiefs mounted formidable protests against the Colonial Lands' Bill of 1897 and the Forest Lands' Bill of 1911, both of which sought to nationalise their land and resources.⁴⁹ These highly successful protests led the colonial state to return control of southern lands to traditional rulers. By contrast, Governor Nathan's Mineral Rights Ordinance of 1904 and subsequently the Northern Territories Lands' Ordinance of 1923 effectively vested ownership of all northern land in the colonial government.⁵⁰ Thus the chiefs and tengdana in northern Ghana were denied their traditional right of control or ownership of land and were prevented from exercising any authority in the granting of concessions to aliens or foreign firms. By such legislation, the government claimed the right to control and dispose of northern lands without the consent of the chiefs and people. In addition, the government claimed all rights to derive revenue from any transactions on northern land.⁵¹

The northern chiefs and traditional custodians of land in the north also benefited far less than their southern counterparts from rents accruing to them from mining concessions and licenses. Fees paid in respect of the mining options in northern Ghana were four British pounds for each square mile to the government, and one pound

per square mile to the chiefs. For every mining licence granted, the owner was required to pay forty pounds per square mile to the government, and ten pounds per square mile to the chief."

In contrast to the low returns to northern chiefs, southern chiefs and land owners were paid £50,000 for 'consideration fees' (that is, money paid to the land owners in order to have the right to negotiate a concession), and, subsequently, they received rents varying from one hundred to three hundred pounds per annum for every square mile of licensed land. Moreover, the mining and prospecting companies paid only five per cent of their profits in royalties to the colonial government." By retaining ownership of their land and leasing or selling land legally, the southern chiefs acquired capital from land transactions which enhanced their social status, prestige and economic power, and thus their capacity to sustain their social obligation to provide subsistence security to their citizens.

Moreover, the southern economy benefited from more investments as European mining companies obtained concessions easily and in turn sold their land titles to commercial trading posts and agricultural interests." By contrast, in the north, the bureaucratic hurdles associated

with obtaining licenses from the government, the excessive fees charged, and the virtual exclusion of chiefs from the process of land allocation mitigated against the emergence of any meaningful relations between mining companies and traditional rulers. All these factors constituted a disincentive for expanded investment in northern mines on the scale undertaken in southern Ghana.

Apart from limiting the size of private investment in northern Ghana and preventing the emergence of 'entrepreneurial chiefs' in the north, colonial land policy in northern Ghana also had a significant impact on the peasant agricultural structure in the region. The frequent demand for direct use of land for such government facilities as 'rest houses', buildings for new administrative centres, open spaces for Police parade grounds and farms for the Northern Territories constabulary, dispossessed peasant farmers of land.⁵⁵ In sharp contrast to the situation in the south, the declaration of all northern lands as public property in the Native Rights Ordinance of 1927, vested wide powers in the hands of colonial officials to confiscate, sometimes forcibly, valuable agricultural land. For instance, when the government acquired very large tracts of fertile land around Pong-Tamale and Tamale for government buildings and various projects, including a veterinary station in the mid-1920s, several villages and peasant

farmers were dispossessed of their prime farm lands. So serious was this problem that the colonial authorities repeatedly issued warnings to their officials to exercise restraint in the acquisition of land.⁵⁶

Taken together, the colonial northern land policies (the monopoly of concessions and prospecting rights and the cases of outright appropriation) had the combined effect of limiting the base for accumulation of the indigenous land owners and chiefs of northern Ghana. Thus, even if they had wished to invest in the expansion of agriculture through plantation farming based on hired labour (like their southern counterparts, whose returns from licensing fees largely financed their cocoa and palm oil estates), the northern chiefs were limited by their meager resource base and a restrictive land policy. The peasant agricultural base of the region thus remained at a subsistence level.

When the potential arose for capitalist investment in northern agriculture, colonial policy was at first ambivalent and later opposed to any attempts to commercialize peasant agriculture in the region. Two examples of colonial ambivalence regarding the promotion of northern agriculture illustrate this point, namely the development of cotton and shea-nuts.

In the early 1900s, the British Cotton Growers' Association (BCGA) investigated the potential of cotton cultivation in the north for export." Successful experimental work was conducted at Salaga in 1903, and this was reinforced later by a favorable report prepared by an expert sent to the north by the BCGA. Consequently, a cotton gin and press were installed in Tamale in 1910-1911 and later at Wa and Gambaga. By 1914, more than 24,000 pounds of cotton were being exported from northern Ghana." However, this cotton scheme was suddenly terminated when British aid was withdrawn from the Cotton Growers Association. In fact, the Association's operations had to be wound up by 1920, as the promise of cheap rail transport to the north fell through and government subsidies for transport ceased. The reasons for this change in government policy were explicitly stated in a letter from the British Prime Minister's office to Sir Arthur Hutton, Chairman of the British Cotton Growers Association. In the letter, the "...unprofitability of cotton growing on a large scale in the north..." was emphasized by reference to "the presence of more lucrative agricultural industries such as the production of cocoa and palm oil..." in the country. It was also stressed that "those interested in the planting of cotton have to contend in the colony with the labour competition of the mines."" Finally, it was suggested

that, in any case, transport costs to and from the north were too high to make the scheme profitable, and that any hopes for adequate and cheap transport were doomed partly on account of the opposition of competing interests in the south.⁶⁰

The issue of transport costs was raised again in response to the proposal to develop the shea-nuts industry in northern Ghana. Very large quantities of the wild shea-nut yielding trees can be found in northern Ghana. However, owing to the lack of transport, this large reserve was never tapped, and the few nuts that were gathered could not be marketed profitably because of the prohibitive "cost of carriage by the primitive methods available in the absence of modern transport."⁶¹

Indeed, by the late 1920s, the question of shea-nut development had become a perennial preoccupation of the colonial Department of Agriculture; as was the intricate link between it and the construction of a proposed northern railway. Trial shipments of shea-nuts had been found encouraging but for the excessive transport costs. Writing to the Governor in 1929, J. E. Symond, Superintendent of Agriculture in the Gold Coast, observed with reference to the profitability of shea-nuts that:

assuming a market price of £30 per ton, ...it is definitely not possible to export shea fat from the Northern Territories at a profit under existing conditions of transport. Sufficient kernels to provide a ton of oil would cost approximately £14 at Tamale, and transport costs to England totals a further £13 per ton (£10 of which is... lorry carriage between Kumasi[in the south])... The advent of a railway would...reduce the transport charge by £8 per ton and make the export a profitable one."

Since the railway was never constructed, the shea-nuts scheme, like the cotton project, was shelved in favour of cocoa and oil palm development in the south. Other potential export crops like groundnuts and tobacco met a similar fate. While the colonial state's policy of keeping infrastructural investments in the north to a minimum, discouraging private investments in export crop production and simultaneously encouraging labour out-migration for the export economy, may have been congenial to the 'logic of capital', it indirectly led to a diminution of peasant productive forces in the region. Alongside, the state's agricultural policy (or lack of one) directly produced that result.

Colonial Agricultural Policy in Northern Ghana

During the 1930s depression, the increasing demand for food in the colony compelled the colonial government to explore the possibilities of increasing peasant food production in northern Ghana. Initially, this new initiative was limited to a series of experiments to improve peasant agriculture by establishing pilot agricultural settlement schemes north of the Gambaga escarpment. Later in the 1940s, the government encouraged mixed farming and the use of bullock ploughs as a means of increasing productivity among peasant farmers. However, in most parts of northern Ghana, the relative ease of mobilizing household and village labour and the wide scale availability of land led to the apparent disinterest of peasants in the new technology designed to conserve labour. For instance, the District Commissioner for Dagomba in northern Ghana wrote to the Chief Commissioner of the northern Territories that:

I agree with ... remarks as to the difficulty of persuading the Dagomba farmers to change their system of farming. These people are very conservative and view any change with disfavour. Even the fact that cultivation with bullocks is less laborious than their own methods will hardly appeal to them as the majority are now in a position to hire labour to make their farms.

The only place in the north where the use of bullock technology and mixed farming appears to have been partially successful was in the north-east, which had traditionally experienced population pressures and seasonal food shortages. Here, a number of conditions made the partial transformation of peasant agriculture easier. The wide scale depopulation of the north-east between 1900 and 1945 caused by labour migration southward⁶⁴ resulted in frequent shortages of agricultural labour in this area; hence, the appeal of bullock and mixed farming technology in that area.

But while bullock farming eased some of the labour constraints, the changes compelled bullock farmers in the area to cultivate groundnut and rice as cash crops in order to repay their debts from purchasing farm inputs. As a result, the production of traditional staples and food for subsistence was abandoned or given less priority. Income derived from rice and groundnut cultivation was spent on food purchases, thereby making the area a net importer of food from southern Ghana.⁶⁵

Apart from the reorientation of peasant production away from food in one part of northern Ghana, the pressure on food supplies in the colony during the depression led to the extraction of peasant subsistence surpluses from the

north to the south through trade. Thus, an increasing volume of produce was transported to the south as yams, maize, rice, groundnut and livestock found their way across the Volta river. While this traded produce appears to have been surplus to local requirements, the bulk represented only seasonal surpluses, which were made available to the market by peasant farmers seeking to obtain immediate cash incomes with which to pay their taxes and purchase consumer commodities.⁶⁶

Although the increased demand for food and the booming internal food market in northern Ghana raised the prospect of increased peasant productivity,⁶⁷ in reality, the main beneficiaries of this trade were merchants from southern Ghana who owned lorries and possessed the capital to purchase and transport huge stocks of food to the south. These merchants proliferated in the northern markets, and took advantage of the relatively low prices of food there during harvests, while offering food for sale in the food-starved urban centers of southern Ghana. Much like the professional traders who criss-crossed pre-colonial northern Ghana, the southern food merchants during the colonial era did not invest directly in the region. Hence their profits had little bearing on the development of peasant productive capacity in the region. The extraction of subsistence surpluses from north to south was reinforced officially when

the colonial state established the National Food Board in 1952. This state marketing agency was provided with facilities and finance to purchase food from northern rural communities and offer it for sale in the southern urban centres.⁶⁸

In contrast to this private and public support for the trade in food, the production of such food crops as guinea-corn, millet, maize and yams in the region suffered from neglect for most of the colonial period except for the half-hearted experiments with mixed farming. The only direct intervention in food production by the government was the establishment of another pilot project, the Gonja Development Corporation in 1947.

The Gonja Development Corporation was one of many post-war experiments in agricultural mechanization by colonial governments all over Africa.⁶⁹ When the company commenced actual operations in 1950, the government imported heavy farm equipment comprising six tractors, of which four were heavy earth moving track-laying tractors, heavy ploughs and other farm implements and hand tools in an attempt to increase the production of oil seeds, cereals, yams and meat to relieve seasonal food shortages in the northern territories and to supplement food supplies to Ashanti and the rest of the colony.⁷⁰

Unlike previous colonial government experiments which were aimed at improving peasant productivity through mixed farming using bullocks, the Gonja Development Corporation attempted to transform both the techniques of peasant agricultural production and their social relations. This was made evident by three related decisions at the corporation's inception. First the corporation's location at Damongo, a sparsely populated town in the fertile heartland of northern Ghana, was intended to provide ample space for wide-scale mechanized cultivation. Second, the importation of non-native labour from the densely populated Fra-fra area in the north-east" introduced a new dimension to the prevailing household relations of production prevalent in northern Ghana. These non-native migrants served both as wage-earning farm laborers and tenant farmers who obtained mechanized services from the corporation and gave two thirds of their produce to the corporation. Third, although the colonial government was its main shareholder", the corporation envisaged a future potential for private capital's involvement in its investment schemes.

Unfortunately, the corporation's main objectives of increasing productivity, resettling farmers and transforming their farming technique were never achieved. Indeed, the major crops cultivated by the corporation never

reached world average yields, and there is actually no record of any produce ever having been sold by the corporation. Given that approximately one thousand and two hundred people were on site, including one thousand farm laborers, nineteen expatriate specialists, tractor drivers, agricultural extension workers, time keepers, technicians and masons, it is reasonable to speculate that most of the food produced was consumed on site."⁷³

Moreover, of the thousands of farmers that the government moved to the corporation's site to take advantage of mechanized farm services as tenants, only fifteen actually settled on the site. Despite all the incentives provided, the inability to retain these migrants as permanent tenants was due in part to the rather high share (between thirty-three and sixty-six percent) of tenants' produce that was demanded as 'rent' by the corporation."⁷⁴ Hence, when the corporation went into voluntary liquidation in 1956 (only six years after actual operations had begun), the official reasons for the schemes's demise were given as "...inherent soil infertility, erratic rainfall, remoteness of the area, and the reluctance of the people to move and settle permanently at the site."⁷⁵

This fatalistic reference to climatic factors was a characteristic and frequent colonial excuse for limiting

development expenditure to a minimum in northern Ghana. Thus, colonialism in northern Ghana prevented a thoroughgoing capitalist penetration of agriculture (or any other sector for that matter) in the region. The general propensity of the colonial states and agricultural capitals to destroy the relationship between the direct producers (family members), and their means of production (their land and labour) was therefore curtailed here by the limitations imposed on agricultural and other investments in the region. The colonial Department of Agriculture in northern Ghana was content to dabble with cash crop experimentation (cotton, shea-nuts and tobacco), seed development and multiplication on experimental stations, and to undertake sporadic studies on the trade potential of a variety of potentially exportable commodities. However, when these ventures proved viable, the likelihood that they would have competed with other investments in the south for cheap labour prevented their further development.

The Northern Ghanaian Peasantry Under Colonial Domination

While direct state and capitalist intervention in northern Ghana's agriculture was curtailed, peasants in the region underwent substantial changes during the five decades of colonial rule, in that, their capacity to reproduce a stable condition of subsistence was severely curtailed by

their incorporation into the colonial political economy. The siphoning-off of able-bodied young men from northern Ghana had notable effects on the development of agriculture in that region. The depletion of labour affected not only the demographic balance in certain areas, but also the social division of labour including gender relations in agricultural production. Various households whose young men had been conscripted or who migrated to work in the south struggled to eke out a living with older men, children and women undertaking all the major tasks of cultivation."⁶

Labour out-migration also led to difficulties in expanding farm holdings and consequently peasant production in the region. Although no reliable income or production aggregates could be found for this period, it was calculated by a colonial agricultural expert that while subsistence agricultural production was valued at between £16 million and £20 million in 1948, the value of all cash and goods remitted back to the north by laborers in the south amounted to merely £0.7 million." Since migrant workers spent most of their time and incomes in their places of work (that is the southern markets), the bulk of incomes accruing to them served primarily to expand southern markets for food and other consumer goods rather than the regional and local markets for food in northern Ghana."⁶

Thus, in the long term, the export of labour from northern Ghana contributed to capital accumulation in the south by those who owned the plantations on which northern labour worked. At the same time, migration removed the human means of investment in northern agriculture - labour.⁷⁹ Consequently, the exploitation of cheap and abundant northern labour in the south not only contributed to the emergence of a petty-bourgeoisie of absentee cocoa farmers in Ashanti and other southern regions,⁸⁰ but also enabled southern Ghana-based mining companies to maintain high levels of profit.⁸¹

By the time the colonial exercise was concluded in northern Ghana, the region's peasant social formations had only been partially incorporated into the national and international capitalist mode of production as a reservoir for cheap labour. The net effect was a depreciation of peasant productive forces in the north without a complete breakdown of their structure of production by the state and private capital. Thus, the colonial state fostered the articulation the pre-existing non-capitalist forms of production and domination in the north with the overriding capitalist-oriented mode of production in the south.

To construct a universal model, then, for the penetration of what is perceived as a monolithic

metropolitan capital into all sectors of the Ghanaian, and for that matter Third World social formations is wholly wrongheaded.⁸² Rather, the relationship between the colonial state and the peasant societies of northern Ghana produced the conditions for agrarian stagnation in the region.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the foundations of the colonial state in northern Ghana and analyzed the basis of colonial development policies and their effects on the stagnation of the peasantry in the region. The conclusion is that the contradictory demands of colonial capitalism led to a stunted, abortive, and uneven capitalist penetration of agriculture in northern Ghana, and hence the preservation of the peasant economic structure in the region. While the peasant economic structure in the region did not undergo any significant restructuring during the period of colonial domination, its basic subsistence orientation was altered towards commercial and market tendencies with the introduction of a monetized economy and the increased trade in food in the growing urban sectors. However, direct state intervention in agriculture did not occur until the advent of the post-colonial state. The next chapter will therefore examine the post-colonial state's relations with the

peasantry in northern Ghana in reference to the policies of agrarian change and the state's support for private capitalist agriculture in the region.

Footnotes

1. With respect to the political restructuring of colonized societies, Scott has argued that the decline of earlier social insurance patterns was critical in the colonial transformation process. Plange made a similar point with respect to the impact of colonial rule in northern Ghana. See James Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 56-90; and Nii-K Plange, "Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1976), p. 42.

2. Following the defeat of the Ashanti in 1874 and the consolidation of colonial rule in the Gold Coast (then only southern Ghana), the British advanced northward in 1896 and established a colonial out-post in Kintampo (a town at the southernmost border of northern Ghana). In 1901, the British proclaimed the Protectorate of Northern Territories. For details of early colonial conquest in northern Ghana, see R.B. Bening (1974), "Location of Regional and Provincial Capitals in Northern Ghana 1897-1960," Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, Volume 16 (1974) p. 54.

3. Ibid., pp. 54-61; and also R.B. Bening, "Administration and Development in Northern Ghana, 1898-1931," Ghana Social Science Journal, 4, 2, (November 1977), pp. 62-66. See also Plange 1976, op. cit., pp. 95-98 for a detailed discussion of the explicit use of force to subdue the colonized people of northern Ghana during this period.

4. Three of the four kingdoms which inhabited pre-colonial northern Ghana - Dagomba, Nanumba and Mamprusi - were linked to a common ancestry, tracing their origins to the Mossi-Dagomba kingdom to the north (in what is now called Bourkina Fasso). As a result of this common ancestry, cordial relations prevailed among the kingdoms. The only exception was the Gonja kingdom which, through competition for slaves, often entered into conflict with the Dagomba kingdom in what was known as the Gonja-Dagomba wars. Above evidence was provided during interviews with some chiefs in the area in 1981 and 1984.

5. Phyllis Ferguson and Ivor Wilks, "Chiefs constitutions and the British in northern Ghana," in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (editors), West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status Under Colonial Rule and Independence (New York: African Publishing Corporation, 1970), pp. 327-335.

6. Ibid., p. 329.

7. Bening (1973a), op. cit., p. 6.

8. Annual Report on the Northern Territories, (Accra: National Archives of Ghana 1928).

9. Ferguson and Wilks, op. cit., p. 332. Plange has provided testimony to the effect that in some cases, chiefs were actually removed for refusing to comply with colonial directives. See Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 100-101.

10. Bening (1977), op. cit., p. 62.

11. With the shift from trans-Saharan to trans-Atlantic trade, several authors have shown how European firms intervened to stifle competition and minimise the benefits to the indigenous merchants and chiefs who were involved in trans-Saharan long-distance trade. See especially, Rhoda Howard, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

12. Bening (1977), op. cit., p. 59.

13. Ferguson and Wilks, op. cit., pp. 333-336.

14. See Bening (1973a), op. cit., pp. 6-9; and also Staniland, op. cit.

15. Plange (1976), has detailed the effects that the shift the market centers had on the network of socio-economic relations around which pre-colonial northern Ghana revolved. See Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 118-120.

16. Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 119-120.

17. Annual Report, (Accra: NAG/ADM. 56/1/258, 1921).

18. While Staniland suggested that this debate was mainly between fractions of the colonial administration itself, Plange argued that the triumph of the so-called moderates was made possible by the appearance of organized protest in northern Ghana in the early 1930s when a few educated northerners formed an association to demand better educational facilities for the region. See Staniland, op. cit., pp. 78-80; and also Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 110-111.

19. Staniland (1975), op. cit., p. 87.

20. Yakubu Saaka, Local Government and Politics in Northern Ghana (Washington: University of America Press, 1978). pp. 29-34.

21. Ibid., p. 30.

22. Ibid., p. 31.

23. Annual Report, Gold Coast, (Accra: NAG, 1936), pp. 31-32.

24. Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana (London: Longman, 1979), p. 84.

25. With such an instrumental role in government, it is surprising that Hyden concluded that "... neither the French nor the British found indigenous institutions very helpful for the governance and administration of their colonial territories." Goran Hyden, No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, p. 194.

26. For a detailed discussion of the manifestations of this dialectic in Africa, see Samir Amin, "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa - Origins and Contemporary Form," Journal of Modern African Studies, 10, 4 (1972), pp. 503-524.

27. Without exception, all the studies which have examined colonial development policy in northern Ghana have come to this conclusion. See among others, Plange (1976), op. cit.; and his "Opportunity Cost and Labour Migration: A Misinterpretation of Proletarianization in Northern Ghana," The Journal of Modern African Studies, 17, 4 (1979b); and also Roger Thomas, "Forced Labour in British West Africa: The case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1906-1927," Journal of African History, Volume XIV, 1 (1973).

28. The construction of the government railway linking major mining centres begun in 1898 with the Sekondi-Takoradi Railway line. This was followed by a rapid succession of new lines: Tarkwa-Obuasi line in 1902; the Kumasi line and Sekondi-Obuasi line in 1903; and the Obuasi-Kumasi line in 1904. Cited in Plange (1976), op. cit., p. 133.

29. Plange (1979b), op. cit., p. 666.

30. Ibid., p. 662.

31. David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 42.

32. Annual Report on Northern Territories (Tamale: NAG, 1939-40), p. 35.

33. Evidence found in Colonial Office Memorandum, Letter # 8460/MP/16798/23 (Accra: NAG, December 11, 1923).

34. Shepherd has argued further that compulsory labour recruitment from the north actually ceased by the mid-1920s as a result of the considerable resistance to this practice

encountered around Navrongo in the north-east, and also in the western Gonja district. Andrew Shepherd, "The Development of Capitalist Rice Farming in Northern Ghana," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979, p. 11.

35. Quoted from Thomas, op. cit., p. 97.

36. Plange offers an exhaustive critique of arguments justifying the establishment of the labour reserve system in northern Ghana. For details, see, Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 125-134.

37. Quoted from R.B. Bening, "Colonial Development Policy in Northern Ghana, 1898-1950," Ghana Social Science Journal, 3, 2 (November 1973b), p. 72. In fact, Kimble argued quite conclusively that the distinct objective of the colonial government after the first world war was to reduce, not increase whatever expenditures were being incurred with respect to northern Ghana. See Kimble, op. cit., pp. 533-534.

38. B.G. Der, "Colonial Land Policy in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1900-1957," The Universitas, 4, 2 (new series, May 1975), pp. 24-25.

39. Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 213-240.

40. This system of separate jurisdictions continued until 1951 when the first African government was established in the Gold Coast Colony. For details on the politics of regionalism and how colonial policy of separate administration fostered this, see Ladouceur, op. cit.

41. Plange (1976) op. cit., pp. 246-254.

42. This company was part of a generation of small companies established by ex-British colonial officials seeking to translate their administrative experience into business prospects and profits. The company was formed in London in 1901 by Major F.R. Burnham; Sir John Pramstone (a former under-secretary at the colonial office); and Sir William Brooke (a former Director-General of Telegraphs in India). These proprietors and their companies were relatively weaker than the big southern-based companies. See Der, op. cit., pp. 26-28.

43. Cited in Geoffrey Kay, The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana: A Collection of Documents and Statistics, 1900-1960 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 166-167.

44. Loc. cit.

45. Plange (1976), op. cit., p. 253.

46. Der, op. cit., p. 27.

47. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

48. Loc. cit.

49. These bills were intended to vest ownership of all land in the colony under the jurisdiction of the colonial state. The Aborigines Rights Protection Society and the Fante Confederacy (both southern Ghana based organizations) presented formidable opposition to these bills, and eventually defeated them. For a detailed discussion of these proposed bills and indigenous reactions to them in southern Ghana, see Rhoda Howard, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana. London: Croom Helm, 1978, pp. 27-58.

50. Howard argued that the affairs of the northern Territories were not subject to debate in the national legislative assembly, hence "...opposition to the usurpation of northern rights was difficult to organize." Ibid., p. 43.

51. Der, op. cit., p. 28.

52. For example, the Wa Syndicate, one of the firms granted a licence in northern Ghana, was expected to pay 22,000 a year for four hundred and fifty square miles of land. Of this sum, the government claimed 18,000 while only 4,500 was distributed to several chiefs, tengdana and elders in whose area the prospecting occurred. Loc. cit.

53. Howard, op. cit., p. 51.

54. Loc. cit.

55. Der detailed several instances in which northern Ghanaian peasants were denied their land by land acquisition practices of the colonial government. Der, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

56. Letter from Commissioner, Southern Province, to District Commissioners in the north, dated August 13, 1928, (Tamale: NAG; ADM 56/1/321).

57. Plange argued that the prospect of a profitable cultivation of cotton in northern Ghana presented a potential solution for the BCGA (an organization of Lancashire entrepreneurs) which was facing strong price increases in world market prices for cotton. For details on

the rationale for the BCGA's support for cotton cultivation in the north, see Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 219-220.

58. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, "The Politics of Agricultural and Rural Development in the Upper Region of Ghana," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1980, p. 12.

59. cited in Plange (1976), op. cit., p. 224.

60. Chambas, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

61. Kay, op. cit., p. 167.

62. cf. Ibid., p. 224.

63. Letter from the Dagomba District Commissioner to the Chief Commissioner for Northern Territories, on "Agricultural Policy", (Tamale: National Archives of Ghana, dated March 15, 1940), pp. 65. The practice of communal labour pools was often equated with the system of hired labour by colonial officials. This point was therefore significant only in so far as it acknowledged the availability of inexpensive labour.

64. Plange observed that of the 1.3 million people in this area in 1948, over seventeen percent had migrated south while the national average for migration from other regions was less than three percent. See Plange (1976), op. cit., pp. 205-206.

65. Population and relatively infertile soils in the north-east created a precarious food situation in the area which was made worse by the introduction of cash crops. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., pp. 29-30.

66. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

67. Indeed, a considerable growth in the internal market for food among the Konkomba had been observed. See D. Tait, "On the growth of some Konkomba markets," (unpublished paper presented at the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research Conference, Ibadan, 1953). Also, Polly Hill observed an expansion of the northern cattle trade during this period. See Polly Hill, "The northern Ghanaian cattle trade," in her Studies in Rural Capitalism (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

68. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., p. 28.

69. Similar experiments were initiated in Tanganyika, northern Nigeria and the Gambia, in a bid to increase food supplies to urban populations and to produce industrial raw

materials such as groundnuts and sisal for export.

70. S. T. Quansah, "The Gonja Settlement and Development Scheme - Ghana," The Economic Bulletin of Ghana, second series, 2, 1(1972), p.15.

71. One of the key objectives of the project was to serve as a resettlement scheme. Quansah argued that this objective was consistent with earlier British experimentation with big resettlement projects in East Africa. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

72. The government provided 1 million British pounds for the first two years of the corporation's operations. Ibid., p. 19.

73. Ibid., pp. 15-17.

74. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

75. Cited in Bening (1973b), op. cit., p. 75.

76. Keith Hart, "Migration and Tribal Identity among the Fra-fra of Ghana," Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden), Volume VI, 1971, pp. 26-35.

77. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 78.

78. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., pp. 15-16.

79. Loc. cit.

80. For a detailed discussion of the role of northern labour on southern cocoa plantations, see Polly Hill, The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), especially pp. 178-219.

81. Although there are no precise data on the role that cheap northern labour played in the determination of profit margins for the mines in southern Ghana, the fact that the migrant workers oscillated between the mines in the south and their homes (the reserve economy in the north) establishes some parallels between wage and labour conditions and the extent of profit accruing to mining companies from using migrant labour. For a related case, see Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," Economy and Society, 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425-456.

82. Michael Watts, Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). p. 182. This perception is generally held by 'world systems' theorists who define as

"capitalist" any agriculture functioning within an economic system whose global structure is market oriented. See especially Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origin of the Capitalist World Economy in the 16th Century (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

CHAPTER III

THE POST COLONIAL STATE AND POLICIES OF AGRARIAN CHANGE IN NORTHERN GHANA

...the old is not yet overcome and remain.. to challenge the new; the new is not yet victorious. The dislocations caused by rapid change are still visible to all; the wounds caused by them, raw and open. New wealth does not yet have legitimacy, and old power no longer commands respect. Traditional groups have been weakened, but not yet defeated, and new groups are not yet strong enough to wield decisive power.

Eric Wolf, 1969.

Such was the situation in the aftermath of the colonial period in northern Ghana that, although the colonial state secured a formal subjugation of the region's peasant social formations to the interests and tendencies of the global capitalist system, colonial incorporation precluded the transformation of the peasant system of production itself. By contrast, all the governments after independence have taken a keen interest in agrarian change in Ghana and, in particular, in northern Ghana. This interest has been expressed through a variety of agricultural policies all of which have involved direct state support for agricultural mechanization as a means of increasing agricultural output. These commonly over-capitalized state initiatives have failed not only to

increase food production, but also to transform peasant household relations of production in a significant manner.

In understanding agrarian change in northern Ghana it is important to take account of the specific historical contexts within which state policies operate. Therefore, this chapter will examine the shifts in political power and in the balance of social forces, changes in government, and international economic factors which conditioned the success or failure of state initiatives in the agrarian sector in northern Ghana.

Post-colonial Ghana's agrarian policy has been determined within the context of sudden and sporadic regime changes, with no less than seven different governments since independence. Nevertheless, four major policy trends have emerged, some of which have transcended different governments. The first period of post-colonial agricultural policy (1951 to 1960) was characterised by an emphasis on state control of cocoa marketing as the economic basis for the rise of the post-colonial state and as the means of generating resources for the country's economic development. This period had little impact on northern Ghana as the focus of state agricultural policies was still on the cocoa industry. The second (1961 to 1966) was dominated by an attempt to invest in public sector agriculture through state

farms and the extensive use of agricultural mechanization. For the first time, this policy involved direct intervention by the state in agricultural production. The third period of agrarian policy (1966 to 1972) was defined by the coming into power of conservative anti-socialist forces that stressed economic liberalization and the development of agriculture through private commercial farming. This liberalization phase was the precursor for the fourth phase of agricultural policy (1972 to 1979) dubbed "Operation Feed Yourself" (OFY). This phase represented the most elaborate form of support for capitalist farming and the encouragement of private agrarian entrepreneurship in northern Ghana.

Although motivated by a common underlying desire to transform northern Ghana's peasant agriculture from producing mainly for subsistence to the generation of agricultural commodities for sale, each shift represented real changes in state-agrarian relations and in ideological approach. In the first two phases, the state became the primary means of production and accumulation and, in the latter two, the state attempted to privatize and commercialize food production. All these policies were premised on the creation of a new "modernized" agriculture which would lead to the disintegration of peasant smallholders producing just for subsistence and their transformation into producers of cheap food for the nation

as a whole. However, the extent to which each of these policies attempted to transcend peasant household subsistence and the use to which the benefits of that transformation was applied, varied from regime to regime. Let us turn to the first of these.

The Rise of the Post-Colonial State: Agrarian and Political Bases (1951 to 1960).

The immediate post-colonial state, like its predecessor the colonial state, continued to rely on the control and appropriation of cocoa surpluses in the southern export economy. Therefore, state-agrarian policies were limited primarily to the cocoa sector in southern Ghana during the period 1951 to 1960. Northern Ghana, and for that matter, peasant food crop agriculture in the region, were largely ignored.

The factors which occasioned this continuation of the 'colonial export bias' are many and varied, among them the need to maintain an equilibrium in the neocolonial economy, which continued to rely heavily on foreign exchange from cocoa exports. However, to understand fully the reasons for this emphasis, one needs to examine the social basis of the post-colonial state. When one looks at the contending social forces which aspired to leadership of the post-colonial state, the southern Ghana-based independence

movement was critically important in determining the internal structure of dominance within the state apparatus, and, the marginalization of northern politicians in this process reflected the subordinate role of the northern economy and society.

The process leading to the granting of independence in Ghana was marked by the intensification of antagonisms among a wide array of social forces. On the one hand, the independence movement, itself, was split along class lines; that is, between propertied (mainly cocoa-based) classes who formed the elite United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and non-propertied peasant and urban workers in southern Ghana who formed the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP). In addition, there were regional antagonisms, one of which arose from the challenge of integrating a politically isolated and economically subordinate and marginal northern Ghana into the post-colonial socio-economic formation. The northern regional interest was orchestrated mainly by the Northern Peoples' Party (NPP).

Thus, the social forces that shaped policies in Ghana in the early post-colonial period mirrored the patterns of capitalist penetration in the different regions of Ghana during the colonial era. The relatively more intensive penetration of capital in the southern export

economy introduced capitalist production relations there, but prevented the formation of a full-fledged African bourgeoisie.¹ Instead, a petty-bourgeoisie emerged in the commercial, agricultural and administrative sectors. The most prominent fraction was that of the commercial petty-bourgeoisie which controlled significant sums of money (from trading, loan financing, transport and construction services), but whose main objective was to operate in the interstices of the colonial economy, as agents of foreign capital - multinational trading, shipping and banking companies.² Indeed, the European trading firms which dominated the export trade in cocoa encouraged the development of this commercial petty-bourgeoisie by granting its members licenses, but limited their activities only to domestic marketing.³

At its very basis, however, the export economy nurtured an embryonic agrarian bourgeoisie in the rural areas of southern Ghana. The rich farmers who controlled the cultivation and the informal marketing of such export crops as palm oil, rubber, and cocoa constituted an important social force allied with the commercial petty-bourgeoisie. The core of this group was made up of enterprising farmers using their initial savings from rubber and palm trade to acquire fertile forest lands at the turn of the century and to pioneer the spectacular increase of

Ghana's cocoa exports.⁴ These farmers generally possessed more than one farm, employed labour and engaged in other activities such as money lending and trading.⁵ A significant proportion of this group was made up of traditional chiefs who had access to the most fertile lands and to capital accruing from land rents and from mining and logging royalties.⁶ The more affluent members of this group entered the cocoa marketing business by forming and controlling cocoa marketing co-operatives which were often used as money lending agencies and, in turn, as mechanisms for appropriating the farms of smaller debtor-farmers.⁷

Although operating in the interstices of the colonial economy, these two social forces - the commercial petty-bourgeoisie and the agrarian bourgeoisie - became suspicious of the colonial interwar policies of fixing producer prices for cocoa and requiring strict quality control.⁸ With their wealth and influence, they formed the basis of the first nationalist movement, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), which was anti-populist in its social composition and political orientation.

Apart from these two propertied groups, a third, more populist social force emerged in southern Ghana, comprised of the cross-section of people with privileged access to the colonial state either by virtue of their

profession (school teachers) or their strategic location within the state apparatus (clerks and colonial secretaries).' This group provided leadership for the fervent discontent among the masses of unemployed youth, ex-service men, radical mine workers and professionals in the growing urban centres of Ghana and formed the Convention Peoples Party (CPP).¹⁰ The CPP spearheaded the independence movement and became the dominant group at independence. The distinct feature of this propertyless stratum of the independence movement (as opposed to the propertied groups) was their apparent repugnance towards colonial political and economic domination and the explicit denunciation of private property in favour of state-centred policy alternatives.

Thus, the six year struggle between the CPP and UGCC prior to independence was essentially a struggle between the propertied and non-propertied factions of the dominant social forces for control of the state. In spite of its apparent overwhelming popularity as the predominant nationalist movement in Ghana in the 1950s, the CPP had to capture the support of the majority of the peasants who were still under the tutelage of rich creditor farmers and the traditional chiefs.¹¹ Rich Ashanti cocoa producers were suspicious of the increasingly populist stance of the largely urban based CPP. In particular, the chiefly line among the propertied classes linked their economic demise to

a potential loss of political prerogatives as the natural rulers. They therefore stuck steadfastly to the CPP's political opposition as a means of protecting their political and economic interests.¹²

The CPP's resounding political triumph over rival opposition parties in the 1951, 1954, and 1956 elections bore testimony to its increasing mass support. Political power and control of the state machinery were then used systematically to secure access to cocoa surpluses and to gain the political loyalties of the majority of the small peasants and tenants on cocoa plantations to the exclusion of the propertied social classes.

In undermining the dominance of the propertied classes in cocoa, three forms of state intervention in cocoa production were used. First the state stimulated increased cocoa production. Second, it relieved debtor farmers of their obligations, thereby capturing the political and economic loyalties of the poor peasants. Third, it took control of cocoa marketing which became the prime means of state capital accumulation and a powerful instrument in the political struggle."

Government intervention into cocoa production through the wide scale enforcement of chemical spraying and

cutting of diseased trees, resulted in an eighty-one per cent annual average increase in productivity during the period from 1960 to 1966 as compared with the 1950s.¹⁴

These largely successful technical efforts coupled with rising producer prices animated new planting and secured a technical dependence of farmers on government services.

A more profound government intervention in cocoa, which had extensive economic and political implications for the consolidation of the post-colonial state, was the establishment of the Cocoa Purchasing Company (CPC) by the CPP government in 1952. The CPC was set up as a cocoa buying agent that also had the authority to issue purchasing licenses to individual and subsidiary buying agents. Supplied with capital by the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB), the CPC generously, though selectively, distributed loans to small cocoa farmers, most of whom were perceived to be CPP supporters.¹⁵ Additional revenue for the company's activities was derived from its increasing share of cocoa purchasing from six percent in 1952/53 to over eighteen percent by 1956.¹⁶ Within a few years of its inception, the CPC became a major source of resentment among the propertied cocoa farmers, primarily because it systematically denied them access to the rural surpluses they previously had appropriated from being the sole marketing agents and source of loans for small farmers.¹⁷

From the start, the CPP recognized the importance of cocoa marketing as a means to mobilize small cocoa farmers. In the early stages of the independence struggle, local cocoa marketing co-operatives, then aligned with the opposition UGCC, had played a key economic and political role. Rich cocoa farmers led these co-operatives and managed to increase their share of cocoa marketing from ten per cent in 1948, to thirty percent by 1961." After independence, the CPP was fundamentally opposed to the social basis and political orientation of the existing cocoa marketing co-operatives, and every effort was made to curtail their expansion.

In 1953, the CPP established a farmers' organization, the United Gold Coast Farmers' Council, later called the United Ghana Farmers Cooperative Council (UGFCC), to compete with, and eventually to surpass, the traditional co-operatives in cocoa marketing. The UGFCC was to provide a voice for the peasant cocoa farmers (in contrast to the propertied ones). This advocacy role was translated into the explicit political function of establishing parallel administrative and organizational mechanisms in villages on the basis of the production and marketing of cocoa. Secretary-receivers were appointed to preside over three member advisory committees set up by the government under

the UGFCC to manage the affairs of the villages. These committees posed a formidable challenge to the political supremacy of the traditional chiefs, since they sought to redirect the loyalties of their subjects to the UGFCC hierarchy, whose direction and leadership came from the government. Indeed by 1957, the UGFCC was declared the sole political representative of farmers, provided with an operational budget of 100,000 by the Cocoa Marketing Board, and equipped with an imposing national headquarters and with branch offices throughout the cocoa sector."

While the political task of mobilizing the farmers was achieved by these means, the economic task of penetrating the cocoa marketing business was also assigned to the UGFCC. With the active support of the government, the UGFCC gradually squeezed out foreign competition in cocoa marketing and incorporated the independent marketing brokers (who had only a two per cent share) into the state marketing system. Finally, the UGFCC eliminated the powerful cocoa co-operatives from the marketing business, thereby effectively undermining the most lucrative source of peasant surplus appropriation that the propertied classes had in the rural areas.²⁰

The elaborate and well orchestrated mechanism of state intrusion into the marketing of cocoa served two

important functions, apart from undermining the political and economic bases of the propertied classes in southern Ghana. First, state intervention in cocoa marketing led to a significant share of cocoa revenue being appropriated directly by the state. Between 1947/48 and 1965/66, taxes on cocoa incomes averaged forty-three per cent, bringing in approximately 1,009 million Ghanaian cedis into state coffers.²¹

Secondly, this appropriation of peasant cocoa surpluses by the state led to a significant change in the overall balance of internal class forces in Ghanaian society, creating the conditions for the rise of a large service-oriented public sector highly dependent on the cocoa trade.²² Employment in the public sector rather than access to the means of production became the principal avenue of individual economic and social advancement. Public employees occupied strategic positions as middlemen between the export crop producers and the world market. Parastatal trading, industrial and marketing establishments were created whose directorships and management posts became prime sources of private wealth and prestige. The social class which presided over this was the non-propertied fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie in the southern export enclave, having successfully undermined both the political and economic bases of the contending propertied classes.

Thus ten years after gaining nominal political control and four years after leading Ghana to independence, the fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie led by the CPP government had consolidated the political and economic bases of the post colonial state, largely through the use of agricultural policies. While this struggle for power among competing social forces in southern Ghana dominated the formulation of agricultural policies and the nature of the ensuing state, a different dynamic occurred in northern Ghana during this consolidation phase.

Social Basis of the Post-colonial State in Northern Ghana

By comparison with the elaborate stratification of social classes in the export sector of southern Ghana, northern Ghana was relatively homogeneous, its predominantly rural economy being dominated by peasant small holders. The only discernible stratification was between the majority of peasant small holders and that constellation of elders and traditional rulers who had nominal control over clan lands, family labour and produce, and virtual control over communal labour. While this incipient social stratification was significant for political control (as discussed in chapters one and two), in material terms, the access of these northern traditional rulers to the surplus produced by

independent peasant households was less extensive than in the export sectors of the south.

One of the reasons for this difference was that in northern Ghana ownership of the land continued to be vested in the state, as it had been since the establishment of colonial rule. In any case, the absence of significant export related activities or investments in mining, cash crop production or forestry, mitigated against the sale or rental of land.²¹ Thus, land was sufficiently plentiful not to have acquired a substantial market value nor, correspondingly, to have generated substantial shifts towards more intensive methods of cultivation.²⁴ As a result of these factors, no landlord or propertied classes had emerged that could be compared to those in southern Ghana. In fact, only a handful of northerners actually owned lorries or participated actively in the lucrative transport and food distribution trade. The majority of lorry owners were southern-based merchants.²⁵

Because of its relative weakness, the traditional leadership of northern Ghana had seen its political and economic survival linked intimately to the continuation of the colonial order. After all, northern political institutions had been sanctioned by the colonial state and new institutions, such as the Northern Territories Council,

had been created to reinforce chiefly power in the region.” Thus, while the constitutional dyarchy in which the new state managers in southern Ghana were being nurtured in the art of government prevailed between 1951 and 1957, a territorial dyarchy, in which northern Ghana functioned as a distinct regional entity was actively encouraged and supported by the colonial authorities. This apparent regional autonomy enabled northern Ghana and its traditional leaders to provide a formidable regional opposition to the nationalist demands emerging from southern Ghana. Thus, in 1951 when the first majority African government was being installed in southern Ghana, the nineteen members from northern Ghana in the new Legislative Assembly were all elected from an electoral college comprised entirely of the chiefs and traditional leaders in the Northern Territories Council.²⁷

Given this northern opposition to the central government, the challenge confronting the post colonial state in the region was quite similar to that in southern Ghana in that the struggle centered around the loyalty of the rural producers. Unlike southern Ghana, however, the instruments used to establish the preponderance of the central authority focussed initially on the political integration of the region into the post-colonial state. Thus, while politics in the south were primarily influenced

by the class position and the economic role of the participants, two different types of politics emerged in northern Ghana. On the one hand, the traditional leadership, reinforced by colonial administrative structures, formed the Northern Peoples' Party (NPP) in 1953 in a bid to consolidate northern regional autonomy within which it could maintain its chiefly political and economic prerogatives.²⁸ On the other hand, the independence movement, under the firm leadership of the CPP, sought to destroy this regional autonomy and to establish a unified and unitary post-colonial state.

Initially, the basis of CPP support in the north appeared very small. It came primarily from those educated northerners who served as school teachers in the south; some urban clerical and education workers based in northern cities such as Bolgatanga and Tamale; and, most notably, among retail traders and lorry drivers, who were more aware and supportive of the CPP's populist platform. By contrast, the NPP claimed overwhelming support throughout the countryside of northern Ghana, a claim which was sustained at the time by the prevailing system of representation which provided for indirect representation through traditional institutions which the chiefs and the NPP monopolised.²⁹

In the 1951 elections which were contested on the basis of indirect representation via the Northern Territories Council as the electoral college, there were no CPP members among the nineteen representatives from northern Ghana. In the 1954 elections, the CPP acquired nine of the twenty-six seats contested in northern Ghana, despite having over thirty-seven per cent of the popular vote, while the NPP got seventeen seats with slightly higher than forty-two percent of the popular vote. However in the 1956 elections contested on the basis of direct representation, the CPP's share of seats in northern Ghana had increased to eleven, while the NPP suffered a decline to fifteen (as shown in Table 3).

TABLE 3

Election Results, Northern Territories, 1954 and 1956

Parties	1954			1956			% Change
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats	
NPP	81,950	42.5	17	74,172	49.6	15	+ 7.1
CPP	72,950	37.9	9	66,641	44.6	11	+ 6.7
Other	37,769	19.6	0	8,665	5.8	0	-13.8
Total	192 673	100.0	26	149,478	100.0	26	

Source: Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana. London: Longman, 1979, p. 145.

From its initial underdog position, the CPP used its political power and control over state resources in the southern export economy to challenge the regional hegemony of the northern traditional rulers (and their party, the NPP), and eventually to co-opt most of their members into the ruling party. Shortly after independence in 1958, the attractions of state power coupled with local political pressures, caused a stampede of northerners from the opposition to the government side of the National Assembly, so that, by the end of the year, only six of the original fifteen NPP members remained in opposition; and by mid-1960 only four remained.¹⁰

The overtly political struggle between the 'old' and the 'new' state managers which characterized the integration of northern Ghana into the emerging post-colonial state had fundamental economic underpinnings. This struggle focussed on three issues: the question of land ownership, the control of development expenditures, and the mobilization of peasant organizations in the region.

The first process included the effective denial of control of land ownership for the traditional rulers. In September 1953, the Northern Territories Council (NTC) adopted a resolution calling for the northern lands, then

held in trust for the people of the Northern Territories, to be transferred from the Crown to the NTC, given Ghana's impending independence. This resolution would have secured formal control over land allocation for the chiefs in northern Ghana. However, the resolution never passed through the CPP dominated Legislative Assembly of the central government in Accra."

Secondly, control over development expenditures remained a central focus of the struggle between Accra and northern Ghana. The traditional northern leadership proposed an accelerated development plan which would be financed by the British and put under their control, while the Nkrumah government insisted and secured absolute control over all development expenditures in the country."

Finally, the establishment of peasant organizations, along the lines of the cocoa co-operatives of southern Ghana, presented an opportunity for peasant mobilization in support of the national government and an agrarian strategy geared towards satisfying national food needs. The government strategy was to appeal directly to the peasants, thereby undermining the political basis of the traditional leaders. Its task was made easier by the fact that there were far fewer traditional leaders in the north

than the south and they were less influential politically and economically.

In this context, in 1958, the Alliance of Ghana Co-operatives and the Government Department of Co-operatives embarked on a massive propaganda drive to establish trial units of co-operative peasant organizations which were eventually to be integrated into the hierarchy of the UGFCC.³³ Although modest progress was made with the registration of twelve new co-operatives in 1959-60,³⁴ the strategy received only half-hearted support thereafter. This first co-operative programme in northern Ghana was piecemeal, without the improved access to farm inputs, extension services and market opportunities that their southern counterparts enjoyed. While co-operatives were asked to participate in political rallies, they were not given the requisite credit advances and other facilities to function properly.³⁵ Hence, peasants in the region were accorded secondary status in overall national co-operative development.

The incorporation of northern traditional leaders and peasants into the post-colonial social formation as reluctant junior partners laid the foundation for the southern bias of development (particularly agricultural) policies in the post colonial state. In this context, the goal of increasing peasant productivity in the north was

given a low priority in a national economy still overwhelmingly dominated by the cocoa industry. In particular, food production received little attention, as the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture were primarily adapted to the requirements of the export crops.³⁶ Consequently, the social relations of household production in northern Ghana remained unchanged and food production stagnated during the period when the post-colonial state was being consolidated.

Meanwhile, significant changes were occurring in the country. The unprecedented expansion of the public sector reflected a heightened demand for government services, while an increase in the urban population led to a concomitant increase in the demand for marketed food. This demand was temporarily met by increased food imports. However, the state's ability to continue that policy was eroded when the world market price for cocoa fell. Between 1954 and 1960, average cocoa prices fell by fifty-two per cent, triggering a serious balance of payment crisis in 1961.³⁷ At this point, controls were introduced to restrict the overall volume of imports and to give priority to goods considered important to the development effort. In response, local food prices shot up, as growing shortages were further exacerbated by these import reductions.³⁸ Within this context, the state's priorities changed from an

exclusive focus on cocoa exports to an increased support of food production; and from a southern focus to a greater emphasis on agriculture in the north.

State Farms and the Creation of a Public Sector Agriculture (1961 to 1966).

While concern for the worsening food situation in the 1960s was evidently the main reason for the shift of government priorities towards food production, the nature of the government's response - namely establishing state controlled production units employing rural wage earners - had both political and economic underpinnings. Politically, direct state intervention in agricultural production was consistent with the ruling CPP's preference for development by public sector initiatives and state ownership of the means of production. Thus, the Nkrumah government attempted to use state managers to transcend the subsistence orientation of peasants in northern Ghana. State penetration and eventual control of cocoa marketing in southern Ghana provided the model, and the surpluses appropriated there provided the means to finance massive public sector spending on food production.

Northern Ghana received more attention in this new situation for a number of reasons: first, it was thought that the region's savannah vegetation, coupled with the

availability of cheap, relatively less educated labour, could be put to good use in a sort of 'regional' division of labour that would entail the production of cheap food and possibly industrial raw materials (like sisal and cotton) in the north, while the urbanized south remained the export/industrial sector. As stated in the Seven Year Development Plan,

It is the intention of government to assist the less developed parts of Ghana so that they can produce foodstuffs to meet the growing demand in the wealthier areas.

Secondly, the north's flat terrain and its vast potential for irrigation appeared to present an excellent opportunity for the use of highly mechanized production techniques in order to ensure a rapid increase in food production and more secure and centralized control of the producers/workers. Moreover, the absence of strong peasant organizations or other organised social classes made direct state intervention in agricultural production both easier and more attractive.

This policy manifested itself in three main forms of production: the state-induced farmers' co-operatives which represented an attempt to collectivize the peasants; the State Farms Corporation which acted as employers and producers; and the parastatal political movements which were

to support production 'cadres'. Each of these forms contributed in specific ways to the attempt to increase domestic food production rapidly and to establish the primacy of the state sector over the peasant sector in agricultural production.

In 1961, once the UGFCC had secured effective monopoly over cocoa marketing in the south, the farmers' wing of the CPP was mandated to organize farmers' co-operatives in the food growing areas of northern Ghana.⁴⁰ By 1964, the UGFCC had set up 992 co-operative farms outside of cocoa marketing. Each co-operative had an average membership of twenty-seven farmers, and the total membership of the groups under UGFCC control reached 26,098 by the end of 1964.⁴¹ More than half of this total, namely 15,608 people, belonged to 193 UGFCC sponsored food crop co-operatives in northern Ghana.⁴²

The provision of highly subsidized, centralized services for land clearing, harvesting, processing and transportation to the co-operatives by the UGFCC⁴³ became the main instrument of introducing new patterns of peasant production and of securing the loyalty of members. However, only co-operatives with sympathy for the ruling CPP were provided with these services.⁴⁴

The second form of state intervention in agriculture, the State Farms Corporation, was established in January 1963 to create government operated farms using modern techniques to produce food for the urban population and raw materials for the governments' ambitious industrialization schemes.⁴⁵ The Corporation took over the old agricultural extension stations of the Ministry of Agriculture and converted them into production units, as well as establishing new state farms and livestock projects. By the end of 1963, 107 state farms, employing over 15,000 people, had been established; by 1965, a total of 123 state farms employed 20,000 people; and by the time the government was overthrown in February 1966, there were 135 state farms with over 20,800 workers on their payroll.⁴⁶

The third mechanism by which state intervention in agricultural production was pursued was through the encouragement and support for state sponsored workers and youth groups to establish farms. The two most widely supported groups were the agricultural wing of the Workers Brigade established in 1962⁴⁷ and the Young Farmers' League. The Workers Brigade had established forty-seven state farms, employing over half of its 20,000 members, by 1965;⁴⁸ while the Young Farmers League had about thirty-nine state farms on which 1,824 salaried settlers lived and worked by 1966.⁴⁹

Clearly then, the overwhelming concern to produce food rapidly as an import substituting measure resulted in a policy which bypassed most traditional food producers (whose subsistence orientation was thought to be incompatible with national food needs) in favour of public sector employees. The farms established by the State Farms Corporation, the Workers' Brigade and the Young Farmers League provided employment opportunities for the large army of urban unemployed, what Frances Hill refers to as the lumpensalariat,⁵⁰ thereby removing them from the cities, where their presence would have exacerbated urban food shortages, into tightly controlled production units.⁵¹ In total, the farms established by the state and parastatal institutions accounted for over 58,722 jobs in the public sector.

In addition, the state tended to bypass most traditional farmers by establishing competing structures of production to attract 'progressive' peasants into state-controlled co-operative farms. The practice of providing heavily subsidized mechanized services and agricultural inputs and credits to selected peasants was intended to demonstrate the advantages of participating in the state agricultural sector as opposed to the continued reliance on peasant techniques of hoe cultivation.⁵² Thus, once the

state and co-operative farms were established, agricultural incentives and resources were devoted entirely to these farms and peasants who did not belong to the state agricultural sector were denied any assistance. As Hill suggests, the destruction of the traditional peasantry and their eventual incorporation into the state sector was one of the Nkrumah regime's objectives in establishing state farms.³ Not surprisingly, the Abraham Commission Report observed that

... our traditional farmers look upon state farms with anxiety. They feel that increasingly backed by the taxpayer's money, state farms may well spell the doom for traditional farmers.

Another salient characteristic of these centralized state farms was the government's faith in agricultural mechanization. Politicians and agricultural planners, echoing the prevailing international orthodoxy and faith in rapid modernization, asserted that mechanized state farms would modernize agriculture and increase agricultural production.⁴ Many believed that traditional peasant methods of cultivation - smallness of farms, reliance on basic tools, and the sheer independence of peasants with control of their means of production and final product - were incompatible with the desire for increased agricultural output. Large tracts of land were therefore acquired by the government, amounting to over one million acres throughout the period of state farms. In some areas

such as north-eastern Ghana where population pressure and land shortages prevailed, the massive acquisition of prime arable land dispossessed peasants of both their land and their homes.⁴⁶ Consequently, many dispossessed peasants were either incorporated into the UGFCC co-operatives, absorbed into the labour force of the State Farms Corporation, or simply pushed out to work in the industrial sector of the south.⁴⁷ Thus, there were indications, at least from the experience in the north-east, that traditional peasant agriculture was being superseded by the state agricultural sector.

However, while this policy raised the potential for the transformation of agriculture in northern Ghana, the heavy investment in salaries, machinery and in land were never put to full technical advantage by the state farms.⁴⁸ First, agricultural mechanization was launched without accompanying yield-increasing technology. While fertilizer supplies were inadequate to meet demand, no serious consideration was given to research into improved seeds for the new mechanized farms.⁴⁹ Moreover by 1965, only ten per cent of the land acquired had actually been cultivated by the state farms. This amounted to less than 1.4 per cent of the total area under cultivation by the independent peasants throughout the country (as can be seen in Table 4).

TABLE 4

Land Acquired and Utilized by Different Agricultural
Sectors in Ghana, 1965.

Holding	# of Farms	Area acquired	Area cleared	Area planted	Acquired/ planted	% Land planted
Co-op farms	870	339610	23705	18413	5%	0.23
State farms	123	245080	90645	64264	19%	0.60
Workers' Brigade	47	280877	25490	19140	7%	0.24
YFL	37	60362	1999	1950	3%	0.02
Other State	128	88386	18238	10369	12%	0.13
Total State	1205	1114315	160077	114136	10%	1.42
Peasant Farms	640000	n.a.	7937305	7937305	n.a.	96.58
Total	641205	n.a.	8097382	8051441	n.a.	100.00

Source: "Statistics of Large Scale, Socialized, Institutional, Co-operative, and Young Farmers League Farming and Service Stations," (Accra: Ministry of Agriculture, 1965), p. 8.

Thus, the question remained, how could the strategy hope to establish primacy over the system of food production and eventually transform peasant social relations without actually penetrating peasant production directly? To understand why this strategy failed to increase food production and to incorporate peasants into the alternative forms of public sector agriculture, let us examine the

constraints of implementation and the sheer inefficiency associated with the management of this state-led production strategy.

In the first place, the misplaced emphasis on creating a public sector peasantry out of a predominantly southern Ghana-based urban lumpensalariat with no agricultural experience, limited the strategy's chances of success. Traditional peasants in the north were much more cost-effective producers than the new state sector. They controlled access to land, used basic tools requiring low operating costs and maintenance, and relied on mainly unpaid family labour. As Schejtman has observed, one of the special features of the peasant unit is that it makes use of labour power (children and old people) which would not be in a position to create value in other production contexts.⁶⁰ Thus, what the peasant unit was in a position to produce with marginal forces in exchange for a stable subsistence required a completely different investment to sustain in the state sector. State farms carried an overhead cost of land, equipment, labour and political patronage expenses which made a profitable return on their investments unattainable.⁶¹

Thus, although agricultural policies in the late Nkrumah period were characterized by strong government

intervention in agricultural production in northern Ghana, these were primarily directed towards the creation of a public sector agriculture and a few government sponsored farmers' co-operatives under the jurisdiction of the state. Traditional peasant agriculture was left to stagnate at the level of subsistence production with little surplus for exchange. The costly and unremunerative investments in agricultural mechanization failed not only to transform peasant social relations of production but also to generate the anticipated increased food production in themselves. There was actually a production decline in major food crops grown in northern Ghana - maize, guinea corn and yams - and food shortages led to a dramatic thirty-seven per cent rise in local food prices in mid-1965.⁶² This food crisis hit hardest at the basis of support for the government as urban workers suffered a drastic depreciation in their real incomes. Consequently, there was a growing disaffection with the government, which led to its overthrow (and with it, the end of support for a public sector agriculture) in February 1966.

State Liberalization: Foundations of Commercial Agriculture in Northern Ghana (1966-1972).

The military which overthrew the Nkrumah government and set up the National Liberation Council from 1966 to 1969 and its elected civilian successor, the

Progress Party government from 1969 to 1972, reversed the socialist policies of the Nkrumah regime and sought to establish a laissez-faire system. For ideological reasons, the role of the state in the economy was de-emphasized; therefore, the state bureaucracy retreated in part from the 'commanding heights' of the economy which it had occupied during the previous government's term of office. Pledges to support the growth of Ghanaian private enterprise were translated into the privatization of agriculture, industry and commerce. The United Ghana Farmer's Council was dissolved and all but thirty-nine state farms were either sold to private concerns or liquidated.⁶³ The main thrust of agricultural privatization, as expressed in government policy, was

... to de-emphasize state agriculture;
to raise both the status of the peasant
producer and his overall productivity;
to encourage the full commercialization
of agriculture by raising the level of
management in the sector; to generate
rural income and⁶⁴ employment on a
sustained basis.

In pursuing this policy, both fiscal and infrastructural facilities were put at the disposal of private commercial farmers. These farmers were also exempted from income tax from agriculture in the first five years. Private companies that acquired the defunct state farms or those which established new farms were allowed to carry over initial losses into "whatever period after five

years as would be required to write off such losses against tax liability." Government assistance to all large-scale farmers was fully guaranteed and a special loan fund of 600,000 Ghanaian cedis administered by the Agricultural Development Bank, was set up to finance civil servants 'retiring' into commercial agriculture.⁶⁵ Underlying this explicit support for the private farmer was the belief that the quickest way to economic development was through the creation of a class of "wealthy individual farmers even if this aggravates inequalities of income within the rural population."⁶⁶

Economic as well as political considerations were important in shaping these policies. Retrenchment in state spending was said to be required to deal with inflationary budget deficits, the immediate debt crisis, the overhead cost of maintaining an overstaffed, unproductive public sector and the totally disorganized agricultural policy inherited from the previous regime.⁶⁷ Emphasis on the private sector was therefore presented as one aspect of a public sector deficit reduction measure. Politically, the propertied social classes, who from the start had been in opposition to the Nkrumah regime, were brought to renewed prominence following the coup of 1966. Key members of this group who occupied important advisory roles in the military government in turn established alliances with the

traditional ruling elites in northern Ghana, and together these groups projected their interests through the new government. The leadership of the subsequent Progress Party Government clearly represented Ghana's merchant-agrarian petty-bourgeoisie whose primary interest was in using the state as a means of restoring their privileged access to control over peasant surpluses.

Thus, while the public role of the state in the economy was being de-emphasized, the economic as well as political pre-eminence of the dominant social forces now in control of the state apparatuses was being consolidated. Agricultural privatization, through support for the private farmer, was therefore a demand made on the state by its new dominant backers. In northern Ghana, where there were no strong propertied social classes, the ability and the means to purchase interests in the numerous state ventures now offered for sale were quite limited.

However, there were notable advantages for the private enterprise-oriented northern backers of the Progress Party Government. The completion of several irrigation projects in the late 1960s and early 1970s around the fertile Fumbisi valley in the northeast, led to the opening up of the area for year-round commercial rice farming. This opportunity was seized by those with connections to the

government who acquired land and loans for rice cultivation. At the same time, the Agricultural Development Bank began financing the first commercial rice farmers in the northern region around Datoyili. These farmers were traditional chiefs and prominent individuals with significant social standing in society. In fact, Shepherd suggests that some of them had been key organizers of the previous government's agricultural co-operatives and also state farms officials.⁶⁸ The government's support for a handful of 'pioneering' commercial farmers in this area was therefore an attempt to reconcile its political and economic obligations to private business with the objectives of economic growth and increased food production through commercial agriculture.⁶⁹

However, this liberalization policy was fraught with major difficulties both at the national level and specifically within northern Ghana. The manner of financing resource transfers to the rich farmers through fiscal and infrastructural expenditure led to a freeze of public sector salaries throughout the country. In turn, this resulted in a reduction in the living standards of civil servants as real wages in the state sector stagnated.

Yet, while loans, farm credits, tax write-offs and equipment subsidies were freely provided to rich farmers, actual expenditure on agriculture declined. As can be seen

in Table 5, the average share of agricultural spending, in relation to total spending, was much lower in the period 1966 to 1972 than it had been between 1959 and 1966. Between 1966 and 1969 for example, agricultural expenditure declined by about thirty-five per cent, falling from 10.1 per cent to only 6.9 per cent of total expenditure.⁷⁰

TABLE 5

Agricultural Expenditures as Percentage of
Budgetary Expenditures, Ghana, 1959/60 - 1971/72

Year	Agric Expenditure as % of total expenditure	Annual %tage increase in agric. expenditure
1958/60	8.8	+ 7.3
1960/61	10.2	+ 51.2
1961/62	7.6	--
1962/63	7.8	--
1963/64	7.8	--
1965	10.8	+ 49.6
1966	10.1	- 30.9
1967	8.1	- 6.6
1968	7.1	+ 3.6
1969	6.9	- 2.6
1970	6.5	- 10.5
1970/71	6.5	- 6.7
1971/72	6.3	- 10.2

Source: Ghana, Economic Survey, (1957 to 1973); IBRD data.

Within this atmosphere of economic retrenchment and selective allocation of resources to private individuals, local food prices continued to rise faster than prices in general and yet, within the context of a largely neglected peasant sector, food production stagnated.⁷¹

Consequently, workers witnessed a real income decline and sporadic demands for higher nominal wages led to fifty-one strikes in 1969 alone, and fifty-five strikes in 1970."

Led by the Trade Union Congress (TUC), what started as specific responses on the part of labour to perceived inequalities gradually escalated into a wholesale workers' demand for a reversal of the policies of retrenchment in public spending and an increase in wages to compensate for price increases. Serious clashes between the government and the unions erupted in 1971."

In addition to the labour movement, other important segments of the public were also alienated by the policies of retrenchment introduced by the Progress Party Government. The dismissal of 568 Civil Servants in 1969 and the substantial reduction in the defence budget the same year "sparked problematic rumblings in the armed forces" and the Civil Service at a very early date." These dissensions were compounded by numerous challenges to the neo-colonial stance of the Busia Government by the student movement under the leadership of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS).⁷⁵

While popular urban resistance to the liberalization policies was growing, the implementation of these policies generated a variety of undesirable

consequences which led to their demise and eventually to the fall of the government. One of these consequences resulted from the government's attempt to 'indigenize' the Ghanaian economy by opening new opportunities for aspiring Ghanaian entrepreneurs to enter the private sector. To achieve this aim, the government instituted an Aliens' Compliance Order in 1969 which expelled all aliens from Ghana, especially those in the private commercial sector. Petty traders moved rapidly to occupy the vacuum created in the commercial sector by the departure of mainly Nigerian and Lebanese retail and wholesale traders. However, by designating all non-Ghanaians as aliens, the policy also resulted in the expulsion of thousands of cocoa farm laborers. Thus the order dealt a devastating blow to the cocoa industry because it drastically reduced the supply of cheap farm labour from neighboring West African countries like Bourkina Fasso, Mali and Niger.¹⁶ Although most of the remaining migrant workers from northern Ghana continued to work on the cocoa farms, the labour shortage on these farms was further exacerbated by the more lucrative opportunities being generated in the emerging capitalist rice farms in northern Ghana.¹⁷ Thus, while the Aliens' Compliance Order and the liberalization policy promoted the entry of new members into the propertied social classes, the old established members of this class in the cocoa sectors were hurt by a decline in cocoa production.

Moreover, local Ghanaian entrepreneurs were unable to acquire state enterprises which were offered for sale or to establish viable commercial farms. Fifteen years of state control of the major source of capital accumulation - cocoa marketing - had rendered the local capitalist class too weak or insolvent to take advantage of the new opportunities.⁷⁸ Therefore, the state now actively encouraged foreign participation in commercial agriculture through loan guarantees, extensive tax incentives and share capital contributions.⁷⁹

In essence, the beneficiaries of this new state support for private commercial farming were largely limited to the propertied classes closest to government, and these tended to operate in close collaboration with foreign capital through partnerships. By attempting to privatize and commercialize the economy, the strategy invariably weakened certain of its supporters, alienated the urban working classes and barely touched the peasantry. Although the intended impact of state liberalization in agriculture did not materialize by the time the government was overthrown, from the start, opposition to the regime was defined by its selective allocation of resources to individuals, ethnic groups and regions to the exclusion of others. Thus, alliances emerged between students, workers,

public sector managers, regionally-based opponents (especially from the Volta and northern regions) and senior military officers, all of whom were united by their aversion to the Progress Party Government and its policies.⁸⁰ At issue was the apparent loss of influence of these social forces as the government virtually turned over economic management to foreign control. Hence, when the government, upon advice from its international backers, devalued the Ghanaian currency substantially at the end of 1971, the coup of January 1972 followed quite naturally.

Capitalist Agriculture in Northern Ghana (1972 to 1979)

The military coup which brought the National Redemption Council (NRC) later the Supreme Military Council (SMC) to power also ushered in the most widespread state intervention in agriculture yet experienced. Unlike the coup of 1966, however, the new military rulers did not depart from the ideological premises of their predecessors. In agriculture, the new government based its interventionist approach on an ideological preference for capitalist agriculture. Unlike its predecessors, though, the support for capitalist agriculture was not based on support for the existing rich farmers most of whom were based in southern Ghana. Rather, the new government sought to create a new capitalist class in agriculture and, to this

end, it focused primarily on northern Ghana where no such class previously existed. The underlying intent of this approach was to achieve agricultural transformation by creating a 'dynamic' capitalist sector which would increase agricultural productivity by using mechanized means of production and, in the process, surpass the peasants and possibly incorporate them as wage workers. This policy was initiated within the framework of what was dubbed 'Operation Feed Yourself (OFY)'. .

The OFY obviously had a northern Ghanaian bias. It involved an unprecedented level of government spending on food crop agriculture and on the construction of infrastructure in northern Ghana, an area which had previously suffered acute neglect. Existing roads were upgraded and construction on new ones was started throughout the region. The long abandoned hospital was completed in the northern regional capital, as was the international airport. Huge capital investments were also directed towards the completion of subsequent phases of the large irrigation schemes in Veve, Tono and Bontanga to facilitate year round agricultural cultivation in northern Ghana. While this increase in development expenditure and the northern focus of OFY investments evidently reflected the higher profile and influence of the northern officers in the new government,⁹¹ the emphasis on the north appears to have

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been equally influenced by the availability of factors of production - abundant land and cheap, unskilled labour - which still made mechanized farming potentially lucrative. Although these same conditions existed and may have motivated the earlier state farms policy of the 1960s, the emphasis on the state as owner of the means of production and accumulation clearly distinguished it from the private/commercial inclinations of the latter.

The strong support offered by the state for the expansion of private capitalist farming in northern Ghana was typified by the rice scheme designed to induce northern farmers to cultivate large rice farms on a commercial basis. Government functionaries - ministers, civil servants, and top military officers - as well as professionals, local chiefs and key supporters of the government were assisted in diverse ways to start such rice farms. The main instrument which the state used was the Agricultural Development Bank which was given a large budget for loans to support the OFY campaign. Since most of these loans were provided largely on a commercial basis, recipients had to possess considerable collateral to obtain them. Invariably, most of these loans went to bigger, more prosperous, urban-based farmers, leaving the peasants with only a trickle of the credit allocated.

An analysis of the Agricultural Development Bank's lending records from 1974-1977 (the period when OFY was at its peak), shows that a handful of large farmers received most of the loans. Indeed in 1977 just fifty-three loans, or twelve percent of the total, accounted for almost sixty per cent of total funds allocated.

TABLE 6

Agricultural Development Bank (Northern Region)
Loans by Size, 1976 and 1977

Loan size	1976			1977		
	#	Amount	% of total	#	Amount	% of total
Up to 500	18	7,480	0.1	150	108,500	1.7
501- 1,000	51	555,850	8.5	149	284,000	4.3
1,001- 2,000	106	173,042	2.7	250	687,000	10.5
2,001- 3,000	130	282,533	4.3	310	984,800	15.0
3,001- 4,000	36	89,470	1.8	95	300,900	4.7
4,001- 5,000	21	323,770	5.0	65	335,850	5.0
5,001-10,000	113	896,245	13.7	56	768,428	11.7
10,001-20,000	298	1,355,204	20.8	33	224,236	3.4
20,001-30,000	11	311,621	4.6	29	412,080	6.3
30,001-40,000	20	690,596	10.6	5	197,405	3.0
40,001-50,000	7	314,200	4.6	12	568,000	8.6
Over 50,000	4	1,507,180	23.1	7	1,691,201	25.8
Total	815	6,507,191	100.0	1,161	6,562,400	100.0

Source: Computed from Agricultural Development Bank, Annual Report, 1976 and 1977.

During this period, ADB loan allocations were segregated. On the one hand, loans for mechanized rice cultivation were larger and went to urban residents with

collateral and a better understanding of banking principles. These included, among others, senior army officers, top civil servants, and workers of the Ministry of Agriculture. In a sample of ADB loan recipients in the northern regional capital of Tamale, Shepherd observed that while Tamale residents accounted for only eighteen per cent of the total loans received between 1968-1970, their share of loans increased to thirty-one per cent between 1970-1972; and peaked at fifty-three per cent in 1975-76.⁸² On the other hand, most smaller working capital loans for other less mechanized crops went to groups or individual peasant farmers, but these were irregular and inadequate.⁸³ The selective allocation of loans led to the emergence of a dual agrarian structure in the region in which the bulk of agricultural investment was concentrated on a few capitalist rice farmers, and a much smaller amount spread over a much larger number of peasant farmers growing groundnut, maize and yams.⁸⁴

This pattern of state support for large-scale capitalist farmers went hand in hand with a preference for highly mechanized means of production. Foreign exchange was allocated to import tractors and combine harvesters mainly for rice cultivation. Between 1972 and 1974, the number of tractors used in the north increased by more than 400 per

cent from fifty-eight to 272. A similar pattern of growth in combine harvesters was also apparent as shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Farm Machinery Used in Northern Ghana, 1970 - 1977

Year	Tractors in use	New Tractors	Combines in use	New combines
1970	35*	--	5	--
1971	90	55	18	13
1972	148	58	20	2
1973	265	117	81	61
1974	537	272	186	105
1975	576	39	233	47
1976	676	100	257	24
1977	776	100	291	34

* Excludes tractors in the north from the UGFCC program.

Source: Adapted from Andrew Shepherd, "The Development of Capitalist Farming in Northern Ghana", Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1979, p. 69.

At the same time, West German aid was enlisted to initiate the Ghanaian-German Fertilizer Project (later the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Project) which undertook massive imports of chemical fertilizers. Thus, the project accounted for the unprecedented increase in fertilizer consumption in the northern region from a mere 3,053 tonnes in 1971 to a peak of 42,800 tonnes in 1977⁸⁵ as shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Fertilizer Consumption in the Northern Region, 1969 - 1980

Year	Tonnes
1969	508
1970	1,442
1971	3,048
1972	4,920
1973	7,294
1974	10,800
1975	10,800
1976	28,320
1977	42,800
1978	11,305
1979	9,742
1980	7,373

Source: Department of Planning and Research, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, Ghana.

An assessment of the agricultural strategies adopted during this period is difficult owing to the paucity and unreliability of data,⁶⁶ the prolonged Sahelian drought of 1973-1976 which affected agricultural production in Ghana and most West African countries, and, above all, the international oil crisis of 1973 which threw most non-oil exporting nations into deep balance of payments' crises. These caveats notwithstanding, the strategy's objective of increasing production in food was not sustained by the massive investment in capitalist rice production, nor did it result in improvements in the production of other food crops

such as maize and yams which also received modest support under the OFY.

Despite the prevailing drought, improvements in food supply were clearly evident in 1973-1974, when there was a bumper rice harvest. At the time, these gains were attributed to the government's OFY strategy. Under these circumstances, the prospect of sustained domestic food production was assessed so optimistically that a decree was enacted to stop the importation of rice in 1975 as the country was thought to have attained self sufficiency in that crop. Although the OFY's emphasis on maize was less than that on rice, it was further claimed that the production of maize had expanded sufficiently to permit the export of some minor consignments to neighboring African countries. Official reports spoke of an annual average increase in overall agricultural production of six to seven per cent.⁸⁷

When one examines the performance of rice production between 1970 and 1979, the increases in production were part of a trend predating the first operational year of the government's OFY strategy in 1973/1974. Production had increased by about fifty per cent between 1970 and 1971 and by a further sixty per cent between 1971 and 1972. Most of the rice cultivated at this

early stage was undertaken by farmers who had established farms on the irrigated lands of Tono and Vea, around the Nasia plains and in Datoyili where earlier government policies had supported commercial agriculture. Therefore, the apparent increases in yields were reflective also of increased land being brought under rice cultivation. Thus, the 1974 increase in yield of 16,000 tonnes, approximately fifty per cent over that of 1973, also corresponded with a forty per cent increase in total land under cultivation from 24,200 hectares in 1973 to 34,200 in 1974 (as shown in Table 9).

TABLE 9

Rice Production in the Northern Region of Ghana Showing the Relationship Between Reported Land Cultivated and Reported Yield (1970 - 1979).

Year	Hectare cultivated	Yield (tonnes)	Tonnes/Hectare
1970	14,600	14,200	1 (approx.)
1971	23,500	21,300	1
1972	27,500	34,100	1.2
1973	24,200	30,250	1.2
1974	34,200	46,400	1.3
1975	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1976	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1977	38,849	32,500	0.8
1978	38,040	28,000	0.7
1979	36,866	24,000	0.6

Source: Compiled from records of the Department of Economic Research and Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, various years.

As shown in Table 9, rice production in the years following 1974 actually declined while the tonnes per hectare ratio continued to fall. In fact, the bumper harvests of 1973 and 1974 represented the peak and production began to decline considerably thereafter.

The dismal record of the state subsidised capitalist rice sector was also reflected in the performance of the other staple foods which received modest support under the OFY policy. Table 10 shows that maize cultivation virtually collapsed in 1974 after experiencing a considerable increase in 1973, an increase also corresponding to a large expansion in the area brought under maize cultivation that year.

TABLE 10

Maize Production in Northern Region, 1970 - 1979.

Year	Hectares	Tonnes	Tonnes/Hectare
1970	60,300	50,770	0.8
1971	56,700	49,800	0.8
1972	54,200	44,200	0.8
1973	78,200	66,100	0.8
1974	71,200	37,400	0.5
1975	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1976	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1977	58,071	55,224	0.9
1978	68,795	61,329	0.9
1979	64,789	43,360	0.6

Source: Compiled from the records of the Department of Economic Research and Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, Ghana, various years.

As can be seen in Table 11, a similar picture emerges from the other major food crop in the north - yams - which, with the exception of a significant increase in yield in 1974, either stagnated or continued to decline throughout the OFY years.⁸⁸

TABLE 11

Yam Production in Northern Region, 1970 - 1979.

Year	Hectares	Tonnes	Tonnes/Hectare
1970	51,400	167,600	3.2
1971	51,400	167,600	3.2
1972	39,800	135,800	3.4
1973	43,700	157,300	3.6
1974	38,500	197,500	5.1
1975	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1976	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1977	48,157	135,000	2.8
1978	41,799	113,000	2.7
1979	48,561	103,000	2.1

Source: Compiled from the records of the Department of Economic Research and Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, Ghana, various years.

While these examples may not be conclusive, they suggest that, despite the heavy investments in land clearing, equipment and fertilizer subsidies, there was no real corresponding increase in food productivity in the north during the OFY years. In all the cases cited, the tonnes per hectare ratio either stagnated or declined for most of the OFY period. Thus, the support of an embryonic

agrarian capitalist class was uneconomical and unremunerative. Most farm credits and loans to large scale farmers during this period were either misappropriated or used in financing other commercial and more profitable transport and retail businesses.⁸⁹

The high public spending on food production which produced nevertheless a stagnating food sector was just one of a constellation of factors which led to an alarming inflationary trend, a depletion of available resources and a rise in local food prices never before witnessed in Ghana's history. Following the dramatic oil price increases of 1973 and thereafter, Ghana's balance of payments was thrown into a permanent crisis. The bill for petroleum, fuel and lubricant imports increased from \$45 million in 1972 to \$150.8 million in 1975, and, by 1979, Ghana spent \$483.6 million on oil imports alone. At the same time, the price of Ghana's leading foreign exchange earner - cocoa - continued to experience an annual average decline of five per cent between 1973 and 1978.⁹⁰ The gross imbalance in external accounts was thus supplemented by a growing recurring debt. By December 1979, the internal debt was 6.4 billion Ghanaian cedis, and the external debt 3.6 billion.⁹¹ Inflation during the period 1972-1978 averaged between seventy and one hundred per cent annually, reaching 116 per cent in 1979.⁹² The food price index which stood at 256.7

in 1972 rose by one hundred points a year later, more than doubled by 1975 and increased tenfold by 1977/78 as shown in Table 12.

TABLE 12
Ghana Local Food Price Index (1961/62 - 1977/78).

Crop Year	Local Food Price Index
1961/1962	100.1
1962/1963*	104.6
1963/1964	121.9
1964/1965	159.8
1965/1966	198.9
1966/1967	175.5
1967/1968	175.1
1968/1969	199.8
1969/1970	208.7
1970/1971	228.6
1971/1972	256.7
1972/1973	294.0
1973/1974	353.1
1974/1975	433.1
1975/1976	697.5
1976/1977	1706.5
1977/1978	2585.9

* 1963 is used as base year.

Source: Adapted from K. Nyanteng, "The Declining Cocoa Industry: An Analysis of some Fundamental Problems," Technical publication series, # 40, ISSER, University of Ghana, Accra, 1980, p.19.

The resulting deficits, shortage of foreign exchange and increasing indebtedness systematically eroded the capacity of the government to sustain OFY policies based on the importation of farm machinery, fuel, lubricants and

chemical fertilizers. But while massive state intervention in food crop agriculture did not lead to a sustained increase in productivity and could not be continued, it nevertheless had important implications for the social relations of production, particularly as they pertained to the peasantry.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has suggested that post-colonial state agrarian relations in northern Ghana have been determined largely by the changes in the balance of social forces in Ghana. In addition, agrarian policies in northern Ghana have been influenced by the government's desire to accelerate the production of cheap food and to transcend the subsistence orientation of peasant small holders in the north. At different times, agrarian policies have been used to achieve these aims first through state control of the extraction of peasant surpluses in the cocoa trade; then through state initiated production alternatives; and subsequently through state support for commercial agricultural ventures. All these forms of intervention have bypassed the peasants.

In explaining why all these policies failed to generate productivity or transform peasant social relations,

the focus has been mainly on the domestic and international constraints to those policies, as well as on the inadequacies and internal contradictions inherent in the approaches used. What remains to be examined is the effect they had on the neglected peasantry and how peasants reacted to the attempts to subordinate them to the emerging logic of production under the supervision of the state or as workers for an idealized class of agrarian capitalists. The next chapter will therefore examine the economic and political responses of peasants to state intervention in the conditions of their subsistence.

Footnotes

1. Howard has detailed the mechanisms of competition used by the colonial state to subvert the emergence of an African bourgeoisie. See Rhoda Howard, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 146-180.
2. Mamdani cautions that this group must not be confused with, and should be distinguished from, full fledged businessmen who have international links and therefore a higher capacity for surplus accumulation through their full participation and control of the import-export trade. See Mahmood Mamdani, Politics and Class Formation in Uganda (London: Hienemann, 1976), pp. 9-10.
3. Crawford Young et. al., Co-operatives and Development: Agricultural Politics in Ghana and Uganda (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1981), pp. 117-118.
4. For a discussion of the early expansion of the cocoa industry see Polly Hill, Rural Capitalism in West Africa (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
5. Howard, op. cit., p 193.
6. Ibid., p. 195.
7. Young et. al., op. cit., p. 183.
8. For a detailed discussion of early political actions of this group, see Howard., op. cit.
9. Judith Marshal, "The State of Ambivalence : Right and Left Options in Ghana," Review of African Political Economy, 5, January-April 1976, p. 56.
10. The leadership of the Convention Peoples Party, including Kwame Nkrumah, was originally in the United Gold Coast Convention. The rift with the UGCC which led to the formation of CPP was itself symptomatic of the struggle between the propertied and non-propertied groups vying for power during this period.
11. For detailed discussion of the CPP's struggle to secure a political base among peasants, see Bjorn Beckman, Organizing the Farmers: Cocoa Politics and National Development in Ghana, Upsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976).

12. The resistance of traditional rulers to CPP political overtures are discussed in detail by David Apter, Ghana in Transition (New York: Princeton University Press, 1963).
13. Beckman (1976), op. cit.
14. Jon Kraus, "The Political Economy of Agrarian Recession in Ghana," in Stephen K. Cummins et. al., Africa's Agrarian Crisis: The Roots of Famine (Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1986), p. 118.
15. Details of the techniques used by the Cocoa Purchasing Company and other state agencies in securing access to peasant organizations are provided by Bjorn Beckman (1976), op. cit., A. W. Seidman, Ghana's Development Experience (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1978) particularly pp. 152-163; and Young et. al., op. cit., pp. 176-187.
16. Young et. al., op. cit., p. 184.
17. The Cocoa Purchasing Company's bankruptcy a few years after its establishment was blamed on scandals related to the use political patronage rather than economic feasibility as the decisive criterion in allocating loans to cocoa farmers. Details of this were outlined in the "Jibowu Commission Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Affairs of the Cocoa Purchasing Company Ltd." (Accra: Government Printer, 1956).
18. Young, op. cit., pp. 183-4.
19. The UGFCC national headquarters was financed by the government at a cost of £100,000. Ibid., p. 185.
20. Beckman refers to the competition between foreign and domestic cocoa marketing interests, (and within the latter the struggle between state supported groups and the cooperatives), as manifestations of class struggle. See Beckman (1976), op. cit., pp. 79-84.
21. C.K. Brown, "Rural Poverty and Socio-economic Marginalization in Ghana," (Accra: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) Discussion Paper #6), p. 22.
22. Bjorn Beckman, "Ghana, 1951-78: The Agrarian Basis of the Post Colonial State," in Judith Heyer et. al., Rural Development in Tropical Africa. London: Macmillan Press, 1981, p. 146.

23. This is in contrast to the more densely populated export production sectors of southern Ghana where intensification of land use was accompanied by leasing and sale of land. See Rhoda Howard, op. cit., especially pp. 48-55; and Nicholas Wadie Ababio-Appiah, "Land Ownership in the Economic Development of Ghana 1945-1975," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Lund, Sweden, 1981.
24. The exception to this land plentiful thesis can be found in north-eastern Ghana where population pressures and relative land infertility has pushed peasants to adopt more intensive (permanent) cropping systems as well as more diverse (mixed) cropping systems. See Piet Konings, "Peasantry and State in Ghana: The example of the Veia Irrigation Project in the Upper Region of Ghana," African Studies Centre, Leiden; Working Paper # 5, 1981, pp. 5-8.
25. Evidence from interviews in northern region, 1984.
26. The Northern Territories Council was a sort of regional legislative body with the majority of members being traditional chiefs. See Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana (London: Longman, 1979), pp. 81-88.
27. There was considerable debate on the question of representation. The northern chiefs and traditional rulers claimed a 'natural' right to represent their people, while the southern-based nationalist movement insisted on electoral representation in the hope that they would appeal directly to the people of northern Ghana, see Ibid., pp. 99-128.
28. Because of their similar class origins, the northern-based NPP and the southern-based National Liberation Movement (NLM) co-operated for a while to form the opposition United Party. That this alliance was not sustained was due partly to the distinction in the level of material development of the two principal groups patronizing the parties. The southern-based group was wealthier and more powerful, having acquired substantial property and access to the means of production, while the northern group's strength rested solely on its traditional and customary right to rule.
29. For details of the discussion on the struggle over constitutional reforms in northern Ghana, see Ladouceur, Op. cit., pp. 79-88.
30. Most of those who changed over to the ruling party were rewarded in diverse ways, including the appointment of some into ministerial positions. Ibid., pp. 184-191.

31. Details of this struggle are presented by Ladouceur, op. cit., pp 122-124.

32. The Special Development Scheme was designed by members of the Northern Territories Council as a means of bridging the development gap between the north and south. The projected total cost of 30 million pounds for the Scheme was to be provided by Great Britain, see Ibid., pp. 200-204.

33. The earliest known co-operative farmers' group in northern Ghana was the Kusasi Agricultural Development Society with a membership of only 1,207 in June 1956. Department of Co-operatives Annual Report 1955-56 (Accra: Ghana National Archives).

34. Department of Co-operatives, Annual Reports, 1958, 1959, and 1960 (Accra: Government Printers; located in National Archives of Ghana).

35. Annual Report of the Registrar of Co-operatives, 1960 (Accra: National Archives of Ghana), p. 7.

36. Beckman (1981) op. cit., p. 147.

37. Kraus, op. cit., p. 118.

38. Ibid., p. 104.

39. Republic of Ghana, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, The Seven Year Plan for National Reconstruction and Development 1963/64- 1969/70 (1964), pp. 73-74.

40. See Jean Due, "Agricultural Development in the Ivory Coast and Ghana," Journal of Modern African Studies, 7, 4(1969), pp. 643-4.

41. Seidman, op. cit., p. 168.

42. These figures were compiled from Shepherd (1979), op. cit., pp. 44-45. The co-operative groups in northern Ghana operated three to four farms on the average.

43. By the end of 1965, the co-operative farms were serviced by forty tractor stations, possessing approximately 919 tractors, 1,087 tillers and cultivators, thirty-two combine harvesters, twenty corn husking machines, seven lorries and ninety-five trailers. Due, op. cit., pp. 643-4.

44. George Benneh, "The Response of Farmers in Northern Ghana to the Introduction of Mixed Farming: A case Study," Geografiska Annaler, 54, B(1972), pp. 98-99.

45. Due, op. cit., p. 646.

46. James Gordon, "State Farms in Ghana (The Political Deformation of Agricultural Development)," in A. H. Bunting (ed.), International Seminar on Change in Agriculture (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 578-580.

47. This group was provided with five million pounds in the Seven Year Plan to establish approximately two thousand acres of highly mechanized farms in the northern savannah, see Seidman, op. cit., p. 176.

48. Due, op. cit., p. 650.

49. The Young Farmers' League was originally formed as a voluntary non-governmental association to train school leavers and drop-outs to adopt settled farming careers. Soon, the group became incorporated into the youth wing of the CPP, see Loc. cit.

50. Francis Hill refers to the lumpensalariat as the group whose economic-occupational aspiration was to enter the public sector, and whose political dynamic was associated with, and supportive of, state control of the process of production and distribution. See Francis Hill, "Experiments with a Public Sector Peasantry: Agricultural Schemes and Class Formation in Africa," in A. K. Smith and C. E. Welch Jr., (eds.), Peasants in Africa (Massachusetts: African Studies Association, 1978), p. 39.

51. Hill suggests that the use of these unemployed urban dwellers on government controlled agricultural projects was more political than economic. According to him, the government's 'new' agricultural policy was designed primarily to solve the problem of urban unemployment, and that the removal of this unemployed mass from the cities onto farms made government control of their political affiliations easier. See Ibid., p. 31.

52. This approach of selective support for peasants or co-operatives with political inclinations towards the government was not unique to Ghana. Young, et. al., op. cit., have demonstrated the persistence of such practices in Uganda; and such practices were common in Tanzania during the years of Ujama and Villagization. For details on the Tanzania case, see Michael Von Freyhold, Ujama Villages in Tanzania: Analysis of a Social Experiment (London: Heinemann, 1979).

53. Hill, op. cit., p. 33.

54. West Africa, 19 February 1966, p. 201.

55. The Nkrumah government's encounter with centralized planning in Eastern Europe (including support for mechanized agriculture), coupled with the proliferation of modernization theories during the 1960s, created a euphoria about the prospects of rapid industrialization in Ghana. The government's agricultural mechanization was therefore reflective of this pattern.

56. This was particularly true of land acquisition for large irrigation projects in Veve and Tono in the north-east which led to a dramatic thirty per cent decline in population from 1960-1970. The attendant migration of younger men changed the gender composition of peasant households (with more women, children and older men remaining), and led to the erosion of peasant production. See Piet Konings, op. cit., pp. 14-18.

57. The Report of the Agricultural Committee set up by the National Liberation Council government after the coup of 1966 observed that "...thousands of workers were dumped on these (state) farms through political pressure and consequently the number of workers employed on a project was economically unrelated to the actual returns..." Government of Ghana, Report of the Agricultural Committee of the National Liberation Council (Accra, 1969), p. 8.

58. Hill argued that the failure of state farms to use their technical advantage to increase agricultural productivity was due in part to corruption, but mostly to the lack of adequate planning and the reliance on inappropriate technology. See Hill, op. cit., p. 32.

59. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., p. 41.

60. Alexander Schejtman, "The Peasant Economy: Internal Logic, Articulation, and Persistence," in Charles Wilber (ed.), The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment (3rd. edition). New York: Random House, 1984, p. 281.

61. For a general economic and cost-benefit analysis of the CPP's agricultural policy, see Tonny Killick, Development Economics in Action: A Study of Economic Policies of Ghana (London: Heinmann, 1978), especially pp. 185-213.

62. Kraus, op. cit., p. 119.

63. The Agricultural Committee of the NLC recommended that, in general, state participation in production was to be limited to those large scale enterprises which had decided

operational advantages over peasant farming. In particular, the food crop producing state farms were sold to private domestic and foreign interests, while those producing such cash crops as rubber and palm oil were retained as state enterprises, some of them with sizeable foreign participation. See Due, op. cit., pp. 647-8.

64. Jones Ofori-Atta, "Income Distribution in Ghana: A study of Rural Development Strategies," Ghana Social Science Journal, 5, 1(May 1978), p. 12.

65. Ibid., p. 17.

66. Cf. an address by Hon. K. P. Agyekum, Ministerial Secretary, Ministry of Youth, Social Welfare and Rural Development - "Aims and Prospects," to the 23rd Annual New Year School, 27th December, 1971 - January 5, 1972. (Cited in Jones Ofori-Atta, op. cit., p. 12).

67. Kraus, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

68. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., pp. 70-71.

69. Shepherd (1981), op. cit., pp. 178-179.

70. Kraus, op. cit., p. 120-121. This reduction in agricultural expenditure was partly the result of the new government abandoning several state farms, transferring their assets to private individuals and laying off thousands of state farms workers. Ibid., pp. 119-122.

71. Beckman (1981), op. cit., p. 153.

72. Naomi Chazan, An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 226.

73. Beckman (1981), op. cit., p. 153.

74. Chazan (1983), op. cit., p. 224.

75. Ibid., pp. 225-226.

76. For details of the effects of this policy on the cocoa industry, see N. O. Addo, "Employment and Labour Supply on Ghana's Cocoa Farms in the pre- and post-Aliens Compliance Order Era," Economic Bulletin of Ghana, (2nd Series) II, 4(1972).

77. While there have not been any studies documenting the return, en masse, of northern migrant workers to farm in their area during this period, interviews I conducted in the north-east in 1984, indicated that a handful of migrant

workers (from mines and cocoa farms) returned home to acquire plots around the irrigated lands in Tono and Vea.

78. It had been hoped that the pro-private enterprise government of the Progress Party Government would provide enough support and incentives to revive the pre-eminence of rich cocoa farmers in cocoa marketing which the UGFCC had destroyed during the Nkrumah years. On the contrary, the state established another cocoa purchasing agency which issued licenses (but not capital) to private buyers. When these buyers became too indebted to pay up, they were incorporated by the state purchasing agency. See Beckman (1981), op. cit., pp. 151-151.

79. Ofori-Atta, op. cit., p. 17.

80. For details of the constellation of opposition forces against the Progress Party Government, see Chazan (1983), op. cit., pp. 224-231.

81. Jack Goody has argued that irrespective of Shepherd's claim that the beneficiaries of the new state support were 'alien' absentee farmers from southern Ghana, most of them were actually from northern Ghana. See Jack Goody, "Rice Burning and the Green Revolution in Northern Ghana," The Journal of Development Studies, 16, 2 (January 1980) p. 154.

82. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., p. 77.

83. The same pattern of loan allocation adopted by the ADB was also used by both the Standard and Barclays Banks which were even more strict in making loans conditional on the possession of substantial collateral. Of the one hundred small rural-based farmers interviewed in 1984, approximately ninety per cent reported that they never obtained loans or farm credit from the ADB or other commercial banks, even though more than fifty per cent had actually applied.

84. Shepherd (1981), op. cit., p. 175.

85. These massive fertilizer imports (most of which were used by large-scale rice farmers) were subsidized by approximately eighty-five per cent of their actual cost throughout the OFY years. See H.D. Ackroyd, "Large-scale Mechanized Rice Production in Northern Ghana," unpublished manuscript, 1978, pp. 7-8.

86. There is a scarcity of documentation and basic data covering this period. The publication of data on the economy and the state agencies mandated to implement the policy was largely discontinued.

87. Beckman (1981), op. cit., p. 154.

88. Unfortunately, food production records for the critical years of the OFY (1975 and 1976) could not be found in the records of the Ministry of Agriculture. However, evidence supplied by interviewees both at the Ministry and among the peasants suggest considerable decreases in yields owing largely to climatic conditions and the move away from traditional food crops into others with higher cash value such as rice and cotton.

89. This view was widely expressed during interviews with bank officials and some loan recipients in northern Ghana in 1984.

90. Chazan (1983), op. cit., p. 177.

91. Ibid., p. 173. At the time, the exchange rate was \$1 (US) for 2.75 Ghanaian cedis.

92. Chazan (1983), op. cit., p. 173.

CHAPTER IV

PEASANT ACTIONS IN NORTHERN GHANA: A REVERSION TO SUBSISTENCE AND POLITICAL PROTESTS

Where in the past the peasant had worked out a stable combination of resources to underwrite a minimal livelihood, the separate and differential mobilization of these resources as objects to be bought and sold endangered that minimal nexus...; paradoxically, the very spread of the capitalist market principle also forced [people] to seek defenses against it. They could meet this either by cleaving to their traditional institutions, increasingly subverted by the forces which they were trying to neutralize, or they could commit themselves to the search for new social forms which would grant them shelter.

Eric Wolf, 1969.

While the ability of various post-independence regimes to induce agrarian transformation in northern Ghana was impaired by the political, economic and international conditions in which agrarian policies were executed, their policies did lead to a progressive encroachment on the conditions required for the stable reproduction of peasant household subsistence. This chapter will show how state agrarian policies, based largely on imported inputs, altered the cost and availability of labour and other inputs such as consumer goods, disoriented the agricultural terms of trade and changed the incentives to produce for the market.

The first section of the chapter will examine the effects of the encroachment of an alternative mode of production on the traditional system of food production in the northern region and the extent to which state-agrarian policies resulted in changes in the ways in which peasants in the region structured their relations with the larger economy. It will be argued that peasant withdrawal from wage labour and avoidance of market relations explain much of the steady decline of northern Ghanaian agriculture. The second section of the chapter will examine the changing social relations of production that were occurring within the structure of peasant production in northern Ghana despite the stagnation in production. Of particular concern here is the growth in prominence of urban-based farmers and the growing conflict between peasants and chiefs over the control of land and their subsistence base.

The Eroding Bases of Subsistence Production in Northern Ghana

For more than one century, the land tenure system in northern Ghana has undergone little change in its basic characteristics. While nominal control has been vested in household heads and ultimately in traditional rulers through the Earth Priests, actual allocation has taken place, for the most part, via the kin group. This process gave the highest priority to ensuring the subsistence to which every

family was entitled, so that unimpeded access to sufficient land has constituted an essential condition of stability in peasant subsistence production.¹ In addition to land, the reliance on unpaid household labour and the resulting labour intensity of peasant production has constituted another dimension of stability, in that production was kept at a minimum and within the means available in the household. These sources of stability notwithstanding, the changing social context of production, in particular the historical conditions under which peasant production in northern Ghana was incorporated into the wider national economy, altered the internal composition of peasant reproduction.

During the pre-colonial period, households produced subsistence surpluses over and above their immediate consumption requirements to support the non-producing elders and the chiefly line. As discussed in chapter one, the social obligations of maintaining subsistence security associated with the appropriation and distribution of this surplus, ensured that surplus generation could remain static without jeopardizing the cycle of simple reproduction.² During the colonial period, however, the integration of northern Ghana into a wider national economy and the role of labour reserve assigned to the region during this process³ had important ramifications for peasant household security as well as their food

supplies. In terms of subsistence security, colonialism was a two-edged sword. The transport revolution removed some of the geographical constraints on the trade in foodstuffs and on the circulation of peasant surpluses. Yet those very same improvements in mobility were associated with new channels for the extraction of rural surpluses out of the countryside in the form of taxes, rents, and, above all, indirectly through the migration of peasant labour to the export sectors of southern Ghana. Thus while colonialism raised the potential for the expansion of the agricultural frontier, it also engendered a depreciation in peasant subsistence production.

During the post-colonial period, notably in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a constellation of factors combined to put peasant reproduction and household subsistence security in northern Ghana at greater risk. The most significant of these factors occurred in the early 1970s with the massive investments in agriculture in support of the emergence of a class of dynamic and efficient capitalist farmers in northern Ghana. This period was characterized by a growing tendency towards the commercialization of land (as opposed to the earlier communal orientation) and the emergence of a small (if short-lived) labour market.

In the areas surrounding large irrigation schemes of Veia, Tono and Bontanga in northern Ghana, land was expropriated from peasants and distributed to "more enterprising" farmers in the hope that the dispossessed peasants would become an agrarian proletariat.⁴ Even where land was reallocated to peasant farmers, government policy was quite explicit about state intentions to change the land tenure system which gave peasants their independence:

In order to facilitate access to land and security of tenure, the management of land required for specific agricultural purposes has been taken over under existing legislation. Some of these lands have been cleared, laid out properly and allocated to interested farmers with security of tenure. The Ashiaman and Veia irrigation dam sites are examples in this direction. Rent is charged on such lands and owners of the land receive a proportion thereof taking account of the size of the land and government expenses.

Apart from the new tenant relations implied in the allocation of the land around the government schemes, a more profound change in the pattern of land ownership and control was already occurring as the large scale cultivation of rice in northern Ghana raised the economic or commercial value of land. Many northern chiefs began to benefit from farm lands over which they previously exercised only nominal control. Some of them allocated land to absentee farmers from the south or directly to government officials in return for

access to state and to bank loans, to free tractor services and to the allocation of subsidized farm inputs. Thus, the institution of chieftaincy, which had previously been weakened by the limited commercial value of the northern lands, was suddenly reinforced by the new wealth of its office holders who emerged as the core of the embryonic agrarian capitalist class.⁶ Shepherd observed that

While the legitimacy of chiefs may have been reduced within their communities, their status and ability to extract a price from 'development' have improved in the region. A monopolistic, and largely covert, market in rice land has grown up, whereby chiefs sell land and use-rights either for an undefined period or, in cases where opposition to strangers appropriating land has been articulated, for a defined period of three to five years....

Unlike the pre-colonial period when chiefs, traditional leaders and elders appropriated and then redistributed subsistence goods in accordance with their social obligations as guarantors of subsistence security, these earnings from land transactions were not distributed within the chief's communities. Thus, chiefs became economically quite distinct from their subjects. In addition to making more frequent calls for communal labour from their subjects, chiefs were now placed in a position of hiring labour from both within and outside their communities.

The use of wage labour was encouraged by the private ownership of land, the expanded use of tractors and harvesters, and the greater access to fertilizers enjoyed by the new capitalist farmers. A labour force of permanent and casual workers grew rapidly on their mechanized farms. The permanent workers were recruited from among the large farmer's poorer kin, from workers made redundant by the liquidation of state farms and from the pool of unemployed men, women and children in the towns.⁶

The casual work force was drawn initially from peasant households, usually from the village(s) nearest the farms. Various forms of payment were used to remunerate both permanent and casual workers, including food for work, the tractor ploughing of the workers' own fields, and cash wages of between sixty to seventy Ghanaian cedis per month in 1978.⁷ The members of the casual labour force who were themselves peasant farmers required no further training to undertake the tasks in weeding and harvesting to which they were normally assigned.

These changes in the pattern of labour allocation affected the performance of peasant agriculture in the region negatively. Although most peasant farmers perceived poor climate as being responsible for their low yields and made no direct connection between the growth in their

involvement in wage labour and the decline of their production, it is important to note that, traditionally, the variable climate by itself (which they blamed)¹⁰ did not affect peasant yields over a sustained period of time.¹¹ In the case of northern Ghana, high risks to peasant production were posed by weather variability, especially low rainfall, but other sources of risk were socially and politically determined. The existence of wage labour alternatives on the capitalist rice farms provided peasants with an escape from what amounted to a threat of famine during the drought of 1973/74. While those peasants who sought work on capitalist rice farms did not altogether abandon their own farms, the continued oscillation of household labour between wage labour commitments and household farm obligations rendered subsistence production a highly discontinuous process in the face of negative weather conditions.¹²

The declining yields and the attendant threat of famine which surfaced in 1973/74 coincided with the period of vigorous state support for capitalist rice farming in northern Ghana. Thus, the significant proportion of peasant farmers who worked on mechanized rice farms from which they could either earn cash incomes or at least receive payments in kind, especially food, did so out of desperation.¹³

A second change that impinged upon peasant household security in northern Ghana during this period was the reduction of rural household size, the erosion of extended family ties and the resultant alterations in the social relations of household production. The increased resource allocations to northern Ghana in the 1970s and the disproportionate concentration of these resources in support of capitalist farmers based in the main capital cities of Tamale and Bolgatanga, precipitated an unprecedented expansion of the urban economy. Opportunities in the retail trade, in food processing, in distribution and in a wide array of secondary industries attracted more people into the cities.¹⁴ The population of Tamale experienced an annual average increase of five per cent between 1970 and 1980, an increase which was at the expense of the labour requirements of peasant households in the rural sector since a disproportionate number of women and children left for the towns.¹⁵

In the cities and increasingly in the villages, the trend has been toward domestic and social fragmentation: from the extended to the nuclear family ("yili"- house rather than "zong" - compound) comprising a single monogamous or polygamous family of a man, his wife or wives and their children. This change in household size and composition, coupled with the increasing opportunities for

non-household employment, caused inter-generational and inter-gender conflicts over economic independence.

While the cohabitation of a father and married sons still remained a common feature of household composition, in the majority of cases, work or labour dispensation ceased to be communal. Most of the younger generation farmers did not see the extended family as the primary production unit as was the case in the generations before them. Therefore, the older heads of households complained that young men now refuse to co-operate on farms for, among other reasons, the establishment of their own family farms. In this new context then, a qualitative change in inter-household relations also occurred in that the exclusivity of family plots and the provision of collective labour, hitherto based on the extended family, lost their traditional meaning. In north-eastern Ghana, for instance, these changes have led to a clear distinction between household farms, on which labour is expended communally, and "private" farms, on which labour obligations are tightly controlled by immediate family heads with little relevance to the wider household.¹⁶

This alteration in the form of the household had grave repercussions for rural northern Ghanaian society. Nuclear families not only became far more vulnerable to a

crisis of simple reproduction because of their demographic structure; as well, they faced the prospect of such crises in isolation." When an ecological crisis struck as a result of the drought of the mid-1970s, household members in northern Ghana had little choice but to turn to the employers of wage labour.

Within this context, it is important to recall that most of the state-supported schemes aimed at increasing agricultural productivity were directed at non-peasant forms of production. Without such state assistance, the partial integration of peasant agriculture into the national economy had the effect of imposing new stresses on peasant households, without changing the organization of peasant agricultural production sufficiently to meet this challenge in a constructive manner. While intensive mechanization, credits and subsidized inputs proliferated in the state-supported sectors, no direct attempt was made to transform indigenous farm technology or to generate an increase in peasant farm investment. But if subsistence reproduction was in crisis and household security at risk, the question that remains is: why were the changes occurring in the social relations of production not sustained? In other words, why did the new conjunctures of capitalist agriculture in the region not result in a breakdown of the cycle of peasant reproduction and its reconstitution into

new productive relations? To answer this question, one needs to examine the nature of the internal structural transformation of the peasantry and the peasants' reaction to the threat to their subsistence base.

Commoditization and the Peasant Response

While it is true that social relations among rural producers in northern Ghana were altered in a manner that made households smaller, more isolated, relatively less co-operative and economically weaker, they did not by any means become fully subordinated to capitalist agriculture in the region. The internal structural transformation which occurred in the traditional peasant society of northern Ghana also served as a reference point for its resistance to economic and political subordination. On the one hand, the community of peasant households which persisted in the post-colonial era differed materially from that which predated colonial rule in one important respect. The community so constituted was organized from above under the leadership of traditional rulers and clan elders in sharp contrast to the smaller more isolated peasant households which are now organized from below, that is, by the direct producers." This change in the structure of peasant households has provided them with the cultural and social-organizational autonomy to resist economic subordination. Thus, in its

external relations with the encroaching capitalist agricultural system, the peasantry has secured the cycle of its reproduction (albeit with depreciating capabilities) by means of resistance to proletarianization achieved by a partial withdrawal from market relations emphasizing use-value production over production for exchange. Let us examine this phenomenon in greater detail.

For a brief moment in the mid-1970s, the stage appeared set for the emergence of capitalist agriculture in northern Ghana, as the production of some of the major foodstuffs was increasingly commercialized and the use of wage labour was commonplace. However, as argued in chapter three, the support for crop specialization through the discriminatory allocation of credit to rice farmers not only failed to sustain earlier increases in rice production, but it also failed to make rice cultivation the leading agricultural activity among peasants in the region." Although some peasants were dispossessed of land due to the rice scheme, the abundance of land in the northern region allowed peasants to continue the cultivation of other food crops - yams, maize, millet - even as they rendered services as casual and permanent laborers on rice farms. Indeed, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, peasant food crop cultivation had become so lucrative as a source of household security that peasant labour allocation begun to change in

favour of their own farm activities. Beginning in the late 1970s and intensifying in 1980/81, there was a systematic withdrawal of peasant labour from the capitalist agricultural sector. By 1984, only five per cent of the male farmers who reported engaging in wage labour in the mid-1970s continued to offer their services to capitalist rice farmers.²⁰ The withdrawal of male labourers forced the capitalist farmers into an increasing reliance on women and children and on the less 'professional' farm workers, especially students, drawn from the towns and transported daily to the rice farms.²¹ To understand this dramatic withdrawal of male peasants from wage labour obligations, it is necessary to examine the factors underpinning peasant decisions regarding resource allocation generally and, specifically, the impact that male domination of these decisions had in the northern region.

With relatively easy access to land and the use of fairly rudimentary farm technology (hoes, cutlasses and sticks), the role of labour is of critical importance in peasant household production. The fact that rainfall peaks in northern Ghana tend to be relatively short and their onset uncertain, made the availability of labour during the short planting season extremely critical. This period, coupled with the preceding period of manual clearing and ploughing, was one of frenzied activity, which often

demanded labour beyond the family's own labour resources."²² This intense demand for labour within peasant households led to the establishment of a hierarchical set of priorities to which family labour was to be devoted. At the top of this hierarchy was the household's own productive requirements, followed by the satisfaction of labour needs among kin groups within the village or community, and last come wage labour commitments on 'alien' farms."²³ This pattern of demand and utilization of labour on peasant farms was maintained with varying degrees throughout the farming season from planting through weeding to harvesting.

Why then did women and children continue to work on capitalist rice farms despite the high demand for household labour in the peasant sector? Several factors accounted for this differential responses of male and female peasants. Unlike parts of southern Ghana where some women actually own farms in their own right, women in the north have rarely owned farms in the formal sense. While they have participated equally in the cultivation of all household plots, women are only allowed control over small vegetable plots which they have established around the compounds.²⁴ Thus, women in most of the northern region were generally denied access to incomes earned from the sale of household farm produce, and there was greater need for

them to seek regular off-farm incomes, of which casual work on capitalist rice farms formed a substantial part.

Secondly, the distinct division of tasks in the traditional system of food cultivation whereby females in the region have been excluded from hoe ploughing and hoe weeding (which generally take place at the same time as labour is required for weed removal on capitalist farms) but work on planting and harvesting (which occur when not much labour is required on capitalist farms), made female labour available for both family farms and capitalist rice farms. Thus at the time when male labour was expended in the land preparation and clearing for the production of the household's staple crops - yams, maize and millet - female and child labour were generally available for the less mechanized tasks of capitalist rice farming, namely manual weeding.²⁵

While the coexistence of peasant and capitalist forms of production in agriculture generated a competition between the two, the former remained only partially integrated into the latter. By utilizing female and child labour which were bound to the home and partly reproduced in the household, the capitalist farmers could maintain low wages for their casual labour force.²⁶ However, notwithstanding the relative availability of women and

children for wage labour, capitalist agriculture in northern Ghana did not lead to the emergence of a permanent labour market, nor could this activity have supported one. Since the employers in the capitalist sector were unable to offer competitive wages and conditions that could attract a significant proportion of experienced male peasants away from their own farms into becoming a permanent labour force," they were forced to supplement female labour with inexperienced casual workers, including high school and university students most of whom were considered unreliable."

The costs associated with changing labour conditions, coupled with the risks involved in using an inexperienced and unstable labour force," contributed immensely to the demise of the agrarian capitalist experiment in northern Ghana and, with it, the prospect of transforming the peasantry from independent cultivators into farm workers. As Friedmann has observed, the transformation of agriculture through the commoditization of households can take place only in the presence of highly mobile land, labour and credit. Conversely, resistance to commoditization depends on a high degree of stability of these inputs to the productive process.^x In the case of northern Ghana, the elusiveness of peasant labour, the mobilization of which could have become the basis of peasant

subsumption, failed to occur due to the withdrawal of that labour from wage labour obligations, and its concentration on subsistence production to secure the production of household food security. While avoidance of proletarianization prevented the emergence of a permanent labour market, it was the partial withdrawal of peasants from market relations which effectively secured the process of peasant reversion to subsistence production.

Avoidance of the Market

A second distinctive response of peasants in northern Ghana to the constraints imposed on household production by the changing conditions of agriculture in the region during the late 1970s and early 1980s was their partial withdrawal from market relations - in terms of selling their produce and purchasing inputs." Although the propensity to produce mainly for household consumption has always been higher than production for sale in the region, the peculiarity of this withdrawal from market relations was complicated by the fact that it occurred at a time when market prices for food were increasing dramatically.

As can be seen in table 13, the local food price index (with 1963 as base) increased from eight hundred and five in 1976 to two thousand and thirty-three in 1977, an

increase of one hundred and fifty-two per cent in one year. This price escalation peaked in 1980 at 7,982.7 and continued to rise thereafter.³²

TABLE 13

National Consumer and Local Food Price Indexes and Rates of Inflation (Official) in Ghana, 1965 - 1981

Year	Average national CPI	Rate of inflation(%)	Local food price index	Local food inflation (%)
1965	151.3	26.2	172.0	37.0
1966	171.4	13.5	199.0	15.7
1967	156.9	- 8.5	169.5	-14.8
1968	169.7	8.2	184.3	8.7
1969	181.8	7.1	200.1	8.6
1970	188.5	3.7	210.0	4.4
1971	200.0	9.3	236.1	12.4
1972	226.7	10.0	259.4	9.9
1973	266.4	17.5	313.4	20.8
1974	315.3	18.4	362.7	15.7
1975	408.9	29.7	473.6	30.6
1976	639.3	53.3	805.6	70.1
1977	1,382.5	116.3	2,033.8	152.5
1978	2,401.4	73.7	3,241.9	59.4
1979	3,695.4	53.9	5,241.1	61.7
1980	5,546.5	50.1	7,982.7	52.3
1981	n.a.	116.0	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Jon Kraus, "The Political Economy of Agrarian Recession in Ghana," in Stephen Commins, et. al., Africa's Agrarian Crisis. Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1986), p. 105.

Conventional thinking on peasant motivation has held that, all things being equal, peasants will respond to increased prices of food by producing more and selling more to the market.³³ Yet the phenomenal increase in local food prices in Ghana (as shown in table 13) was concurrent with

the stagnation of food production during this period. That the peasant food sector in northern Ghana did not take advantage of these price increases, but instead defied the laws of classical economics by creating the so-called 'backward sloping supply curve', led to a perception that the region's peasant agriculture was a backward and static area of economic activity likely to remain so because of farmer inertia and unresponsiveness to economic advantage.³⁴

On the contrary, the case of northern Ghana shows that the peasant withdrawal strategy, aside from helping them escape commoditization, was predicated on finding new, or elaborating existing, means of self-reliance and autonomy anchored in what Friedmann described as the peasant "culture of reproduction",³⁵ without overtly depending on government, the agricultural wage sector or the crisis ravaged markets.

In fact, it was the agricultural terms of trade,³⁶ rather than market prices per se, that were most important in determining the relationship of peasants to markets. Thus, their decision to sell less or to stop selling food to the market was linked to the lack of consumer goods such as cloth, hunting and fishing accessories, kerosene and drugs in the market.³⁷ The overwhelming conclusion, then, was that higher food prices notwithstanding, the amount of money and effort required to secure the other consumer items

necessary to complete household subsistence made selling at the market uneconomical. Thus, during the late 1970s and early 1980s when climatic conditions in the region were most uncertain and the acute shortage of foreign exchange led to a severe scarcity of consumer commodities in the markets, the northern region's peasants produced only a small surplus beyond their domestic requirements. Of this, only a fraction ever made it to the local and regional markets, as peasants stored what meager surpluses they had.³⁸

The general shortages of consumer goods were further exacerbated by the poor state of transportation between the food producing hinterland and such market centres as Tamale, Yendi, Salaga and Damongo. In reality, a disproportionate amount of what appeared to be higher prices for food on the market invariably turned out to be profits accruing to urban-based middle-men who owned lorries (and tractors) and charged exorbitant fees to transport food to the market centres.³⁹ As a result, even the few peasants who might have benefited from the relatively higher food prices were prevented from doing so by the 'food merchants'.

Thus the deterioration of the terms of trade for food, itself a result of the deterioration in Ghana's overall international terms of trade, pushed the peasantry back into production primarily for subsistence, with less

emphasis on exchange or market relations.⁴⁰ So widespread were the shortages caused by this withdrawal, that successive military regimes in the late 1970s and early 1980s passed decrees to make withholding food from the market a criminal offense, punishable by confiscation of the food, public flogging and possible imprisonment.⁴¹ Frequent raids by military and police personnel on peasant households, further intimidated peasants and added a personal risk dimension to the production of food surpluses beyond the household's subsistence needs.⁴²

While the conflation of poor agricultural terms of trade, a heavy transportation burden and high personal risk bore heavily on the peasants' decision to reduce their interaction with the market, other factors associated with the conditions of production in the region made this 'exit option' possible. In northern Ghana where peasants still possessed easy access to land, where mobility of labour was restrained by the demands of household farms, and where there was no compulsion imposed on peasants by an overbearing capitalist sector, the reversion to subsistence production became inevitable.⁴³

This intensified pursuit of self-sufficiency by peasant households, when translated into regional and national terms, meant stagnation and even regression of

peasant agriculture in the north. There was little incentive or inclination to intensify peasant agriculture in order to improve productivity by investing in more mechanized farm technology or by hiring more labour as these held out no prospect of better material returns to the peasants." So long as the reproduction of the peasant means of production - household labour - was accomplished through subsistence production and peasant self-sufficiency was attained, the transformation of the peasantry from within became unattainable. In the absence of a vertical integration of peasants into the wider economy and the transformation of their subsistence orientation, a horizontal extension of peasant subsistence production prevailed. Let us now examine this phenomenon of an urban peasantry driven by the same motivation as the rural peasants.

Extension of Subsistence Production: The 'Urban' Peasants

The concern with food security that is inherent in peasant subsistence production came in the late 1970s and early 1980s to affect urban residents as well. Unlike some of their predecessors who had been induced to farm by government incentives, a new breed of 'urban farmers' took up farming without the backing of the government and without any interest in competing with or in transforming

traditional peasant agriculture. These were 'desperate' farmers who were driven into farming by the threat of starvation. The food shortages that followed the peasant reversion to subsistence deprived significant sections of the urban population of access to food in the market.⁴⁵

Even when food was available in the market, prices were far too high for this lowly paid salariat. Salaries of people holding lower level jobs in the state sector met only between ten to fifteen percent of their total subsistence needs,⁴⁶ and this reflected an overall national trend. At the worst point in June 1983, when food prices were at their peak, the estimated urban cost of a minimum nutrition diet was 168 Ghanaian cedis per person per day. At this time, the minimum wage was thirty-five Ghanaian cedis daily (or 1,000 cedis a month), and upper middle level civil servants earned 2,000 cedis a month.⁴⁷ It follows that the bulk of the needs of these urban-based public sector workers (including food) must have been provided for by the returns from their farming and other incidental activities.

In spite of the relatively insignificant contribution that the remunerations from their regular jobs made to the income of this group of farmers, few resigned their jobs in order to devote full-time attention to their farms.⁴⁸ However, the majority devoted more and more time

to their farms (reflecting their perception of the relative returns obtained), while continuing to hold on to their regular jobs.⁴⁹

The key to this 'dual mandate' of the urban-based farmers can be found in the qualitatively different internal composition of their households and consequently the peculiarity of their conditions of production. The urban-based farmer, on the average, had a smaller family and a far less extensive household than the rural peasant. Thus, the average size of the urban-based peasant household was seven compared with nineteen for rural peasants.⁵⁰ Of those seven members of the urban farmer's household, fewer than half were regularly available for work on the farm since the women normally engaged in their own retail, food processing or sewing business while the children attended school. As a result, this category of farmers relied more heavily on the use of hired labour and, unlike the rural case, this hired labour was obtained mainly from outside the kin group on a contractual basis. This labour was generally paid in the form of daily wages or lump-sum payments for predetermined work contracts and the primary source of funds to meet those expenses was the salaries/wages earned in the urban farmers' wage jobs; this was the main justification for maintaining those jobs at all cost.

Another significant difference between the rural peasants and the urban-based farmers was the latter's more wide spread reliance on semi-mechanized processes of production. Lacking the cheap labour base of the extended family, these urban-based farmers tended to adopt tractor ploughing, used family labour for planting and some weeding, and relied extensively on hired labour for the more tedious weeding and harvesting tasks. Given these qualitative differences between the rural peasants and urban-based farmers, the question arises: Why has this new group not spearheaded a process of internal differentiation among the peasantry in northern Ghana (as was the case in the cocoa sector of southern Ghana at the turn of the century)?⁵¹

This question has long puzzled all those who have attempted to grasp the significance, and forecast the fortunes, of relatively capital-intensive and technically sophisticated farms directly operated by their owners with the use of some off-farm workers.⁵² Two factors can help to explain why this new breed of farmers have so far been unable to accumulate capital on a sustained basis despite using means of production which are partly capitalist.

First, despite adopting relatively more capital intensive means of production, the capacity of the urban-based farmers to produce an investible surplus has been circumscribed by the limitations of family size and by the

amount of free labour available. Essentially, the labour process of the urban farm enterprise has retained the patriarchal character of the rural peasant set up with the predominance of the self-sufficient family-labour farm as the basic unit of production and consumption. In addition, these urban farmers incurred relatively higher costs of production by paying wages, purchasing or renting farm inputs and contracting farm services. The most significant cost to this group has been that of transportation. Being residents in the urban centers, most of these farmers had farms at least twenty miles inland to which they had to commute on a daily basis, and transport seeds, fertilizers, farm implements and labour."

These costs, coupled with the fact that they had little or no assistance from the government, made the agricultural endeavors of these urban farmers rather marginal and ensured that their production of surplus at a profit remained negligible. Indeed, so high was their cost of production that many urban farmers had some form of indebtedness to traders (through the purchase of consumer goods) and to the owners of the tractors and combine harvesters they rented." A very few owned their own tractors or other equipment;" the majority relied on the rental of farm equipment from rich farmers or from the Agricultural Mechanization Division of the Ministry of

Agriculture.⁸⁶ The greatest debts, however, were owed to farm laborers, some of whose wages were not fully paid. In a few cases, these farmers lost substantial portions of their produce (including entire farms) to creditors and disgruntled workers who, having not been paid, would frequently burn and loot the farms on which they had worked.⁸⁷

The second factor which mitigated against the possibility that this new group of urban-based farmers could play a pioneering role in agricultural transformation was that the fundamental premise of their engagement in agriculture was the necessity to subsist by creating self-contained productive activities independent of the state. These new farmers were also driven by the necessity to secure a household subsistence, and therefore also allocated the factors of production - in particular the available household labour - so that the basic food needs of the family could be met even in the event of a bad harvest.⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, then, the proportion of food consumed by their household (including contingent reserve and seeds for replanting) continued to be higher than that sold on the market.⁸⁹ Thus, the producing households preserved not only their self-sufficiency by transforming only their surplus into commodities, but also they have retained their independence - expressed in their freedom to allocate labour

time between commercial production and immediate consumption.⁶⁰

Consequently, the new urban-based farmers like the old rural peasants were primarily concerned with subsistence and survival. Notwithstanding the generational, locational, and technological gaps which separated them, the old and new peasants constitute two sides of the same coin of subsistence peasant producers. The emergence of these desperate peasants, then, represented an extension of the need for subsistence security and, together, both branches of the peasantry collaborated in defence of subsistence production. Let us now examine how these changes in the relations of production in the peasant society of northern Ghana manifested themselves in political struggles within the region.

In Defence of Subsistence: Peasant Political Actions in Northern Ghana

Peasant access to land, nominally controlled by traditional institutions, now had to be reconciled with the emergence of relatively autonomous independent peasant households, among them the urban farmers whose ties to the traditional system were quite remote. On the one hand, direct producers began to seek unlimited, freehold access to land while, on the other, customary land owners sought to

consolidate, extend, and legalize their claims over land. The struggle that ensued between the direct producers and their traditional rulers led to armed conflicts in two northern communities as shown in figure 4. The most serious of these conflicts occurred in the Gonja district (between the aristocratic Gonja and the commoner Vagalla in April 1980);⁴ and in the Nanumba district (between the chiefly Nanumba and the 'settler' Konkomba in May/June 1981).⁴

FIGURE 4

Areas of Conflict in Northern Ghana

Source: Adapted from Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana. London: Longman, 1979), p. 21.

Disputes over Land

The Gonja/Vagalla and Nanumba/Konkomba conflicts were essentially peasant revolts triggered by encroachments on their essential means of production - land and labour - and on their surpluses. As detailed in chapter one, the institution of chieftaincy in northern Ghana has depended on tribute in the form of labour, animals and crops provided by the mainly subsistence farmers. In the Gonja district where there is a clear distinction between the nobility and the commoners and where this distinction corresponds to the customary ownership of land and its use by the commoners/settlers,⁶¹ tributary obligation is mandatory. Such tribute is used to support the chief's household, to maintain his court, and, through the divisional chiefs, to render tribute to the king (the Yebonwura).⁶² The Nanumba chiefs also demanded regular contributions of labour from the 'settler' Konkomba farmers during land clearing and raising of mounds on yam farms, and when weeds were being controlled on the chiefs' farms.⁶³

In the context of the general economic decline in the late 1970s when subsistence production became the primary and only source of economic activity for peasants and the main source of surplus appropriation for the non-

producing rulers, control over land became an even more critical factor in peasant social relations. Thus, in order to extend their relative autonomy, Vagalla and Konkomba peasants began to agitate for direct control over the land which they farmed. In 1978 following indications that the government would acquiesce to the demands of northern chiefs and elites that the control over northern lands be returned to traditional rulers (as pertained in the south),⁶⁶ "subject" peoples throughout the north began to agitate for direct control of their own land. The commoners of Gonja (the Nyamesi) sent several petitions and representations to Accra requesting that the land should be given to them rather than being returned to the dominating Gonja aristocracy.⁶⁷ Similarly, the 'settler' Konkomba people in the Nanumba district made forceful representations to the Northern Lands Commission in 1978 "...asking for the entire eastern Dagomba as their land".⁶⁸ Elsewhere in the region, the Builsa people in the north-east challenged the Mamprusi nobility who ruled over them and controlled their lands.

The apparent restlessness of peasants throughout the region over the question of land was founded on the possessiveness that the traditional nobilities (Dagomba, Gonja, Nanumba and Mamprusi) had demonstrated in past inter-regional land claims. One notable example occurred in 1968 when the Nanumba paramountcy was engaged in a protracted

dispute with chiefs in the Krachi area neighboring Brong-Ahafo region over a fertile strip of land called the Kpasa lands across the Oti river. These disputes, commonly referred to as the "Kpasa Land Disputes," were revived in 1979 at the height of the northern chiefs' demands for full control over their own lands. At the time, the law courts settled the Kpasa land disputes in favour of the Nanumba paramountcy, thereby strengthening the nobility's determination to consolidate its jurisdiction over all the land.

On May 21, 1981, as the hostilities between the Nanumba and the Konkomba were simmering, the paramount chief of Nanumba stated publicly that:

I wish to emphasize that so far as the law courts have given judgement in my favour in the Kpasa Land dispute as the substantive owner of Kpasa lands, I will not lose a piece of that land to any individual or group.

This victory speech was accompanied locally by an intensification of the tributary requirements that Nanumba chiefs made on the Konkomba peasants in an attempt to formalise their control over the land and to introduce strict conditions of tenancy.⁷⁰

In other parts of the region, notably in the Gonja district (around Damongo), the increasing commercialization of agriculture and the potential returns from leases made on

huge tracts of game reserve land led chiefs to seek any means to protect their prerogatives over land." Thus, when for the first time in northern Ghana's history the 1979 constitution returned legal control over northern lands to the traditional rulers, the stage was set for a confrontation between commoners and chiefs in that area."

Given the scarcity of reliable information on the events which led up to the two peasant revolts, it is difficult to determine whose claims over land precipitated the reaction that escalated into a full-scale conflict." Suffice it to say, however, that the threat to subsistence security on both sides - on the side of the peasants, a resistance to further intensification of their tributary obligations; and on the side of the rulers, a suspicion that peasant autonomy would lead to the cessation of surplus transfers - led to this struggle over access to the main means of production, the land. While this struggle was fundamentally economic, it was given a political character by the series of alliances that rural peasants formed with an increasing number of urban-based farmers who saw in the revolts some potential for easier access to land.

Rural-Urban Alliances in Defense of Subsistence

The resistance option adopted by both the Vagalla and Konkomba peasants was without precedent. Earlier encroachments on their productive base - some of them more profound than the ones in the late 1970s and early 1980s - had elicited rather passive and defeatist responses leading to a reluctant acceptance of their new conditions of servitude. At that time, the political weakness of the peasantry was all too clear. Its vertical segmentation into local communities, clans and family groups and the differentiation of interests within the communities themselves, combined to prevent the crystallization of a widespread peasant consensus. However, by the late 1970s, significant changes in the local as well as national political environment facilitated the resort to rebellion.

In the wider society, the Nkrumah Government's encouragement of peasant co-operative associations in the 1960s, although short-lived, provided the basis of an alternative 'mobilizing ideology' which challenged the exclusive right to rule hitherto claimed by the traditional leaders and chiefs in northern Ghana. This 'mobilizing ideology' was revived and reinforced (for different reasons) by two mutually-exclusive tendencies: the coming

into power of militant groups in 1979 and in 1981 and the increasing militancy of evangelical church groups in the area during the same period. Let us examine the impact of these two tendencies closely.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was an upsurge of protest politics throughout Ghana. The escalation of popular discontent against the military regime of General Acheampong in 1977, although largely an urban led activity, owed its origins to the food shortages and the consequent high cost of living brought to a head by the peasant reversion to subsistence. Consequently, the popular military insurrection which brought Jerry Rawlings and his Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) to power in June 1979 and again in December 1981 established for the first time a rudimentary framework for the manifestation of protest politics at the grassroots. In 1979, the Rawlings AFRC encouraged the formation of 'Peoples' Tribunals', and, since 1981, the government has encouraged the formation of Peoples' and Workers' Defense Committees (PDCs and WDCs, now known as the Committees in Defense of the Revolution CDRs). Initially, these committees were composed of militant workers in the cities and equally vocal peasant groups in the rural areas. The latter was more prominent throughout northern Ghana, particularly in areas such as those

inhabited by the Konkomba where peasant protests were already emerging.⁷⁴

In 1979, Rawlings stressed the potency and potential of people power and admonished the oppressed to fight for their rights, a prompting which led in part to the revitalization of the Konkomba Youth Association in Nanyumba district, and similarly of the Vagalla Youth Association in the Gonja district - both led by urban-based educated youth.⁷⁵ Their contact and alliance with the rural-based peasants was fostered primarily by the renewed interest in agricultural production that the urban elites developed during their desperate search for subsistence in the late 1970s.

It was in this generally permissive political environment that new, militant rural organizations drew their inspiration, if not their authority.⁷⁶ During this period, the PDCs which emerged in most villages in northern Ghana took an active role in the administration of justice at the local level, often on a parallel basis with traditional institutions, and sometimes challenging the latter. They also engaged in village self-help projects and, in a number of cases, competed with established traditional structures of authority by articulating their demands for services such as roads, good drinking water,

education and health facilities directly to local, regional and national governments without necessarily passing through their chiefs.⁷⁷ Between 1979 and 1984, over eighty representations were made by area PDCs and WDCs to the District Administrative Officer in the Nanumba district, and a comparable number was recorded in the Eastern Dagomba district capital at Yendi.⁷⁸ The increasing popularity of such rural peasant actions in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the legitimacy accorded the resulting organizations by local and national political leaders, induced them to challenge traditional practices which they considered detrimental to their subsistence interests.

The second tendency which encouraged peasant militancy during this period was the work of various churches and international non-governmental agencies in northern Ghana. In both the Gonja and the Nanumba areas, the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (with financial backing from several international donors, among them, the World Council of Churches, World Neighbors of the United States, and the Canadian CUSO) undertook educational, health and agricultural extension projects in the area. The Catholic Church had a very strong mission outpost equipped with a health clinic in Bimbilla (the Nanumba district capital) and an equally strong presence in Tuna, the heartland of Vagalla resistance against the Gonja.

Also, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church established agricultural extension stations in both Yendi and Chereponi from where extension agents, preachers and adult educators visited the surrounding Konkomba villages on a regular basis."

Along with their regular sermons among the Vagalla and Konkomba peasant communities, the adult literacy, health and agricultural extension programs of the church missions espoused the concept of 'fairness' to their congregations and, while training peasant farmers in the use of bullocks for ploughing, they preached a combination of religion and modernity. Thus,

The Vagalla came to believe that the Christian god wanted them to keep their agricultural produce, and that it was not necessary to accept Gonja overlords and hence to pay tribute to them.

This connection between religion and revolt was encouraged in church pulpits and in church projects throughout rural northern Ghana. The Archbishop of the Catholic Diocese in the northern region argued that:

Ethnic discrimination and domination and the practice of various kinds of injustice are fertile grounds for a revolt of any kind. When one ethnic group considers itself as divinely constituted to lord it over another, and furthermore to consider that other groups possess any significance only in so far as it observes its place of a "loyal subject" to do whatever the overlord commands, then you can be sure that the seed for violent

revolt is being nurtured by this "overlord" group against itself.

A vital instrument which helped to transform sentiments of discontent among peasants into rebellion was thus religion. With specific reference to the Gonja and Nanumba nobility, the Archbishop stressed that the unwillingness by some groups in the region to let go of glories based on past conquest or first settlement was linked to "a system of serfdom and feudalism" based on the claim by these groups to the exclusive ownership of land tenure and consequently on demands for levies in cash and in kind from the dominated groups. He concluded that this system was both unjust and unsustainable.⁸²

With such endorsements of peasant revolt coming from prominent people throughout northern Ghana, the inherent conservatism of both the farm and village, which demanded passive political behaviour from the peasantry, was gradually overcome, as peasants started demanding their rights to a fair share of land and to control of their produce.

The peasant revolts that ensued not only represented a decisive challenge to the traditional hegemony of the nobility in northern Ghana, but also, in effect, defended the conditions of subsistence production in the

region. While the outcomes of the two peasant revolts were different, they both ultimately secured some measure of greater autonomy for peasants in the region. To understand the context in which peasants increased their autonomy vis-a-vis the nobility, let us first examine some of the reasons for the different outcomes of the peasant revolts.

The Vagalla protest against the Gonja nobility was crushed by Gonja armed repression while the Konkomba inflicted a decisive military defeat on the Nanumba nobility. In the case of the Gonja the nobility was more cohesive and possessed a highly developed military tradition dating back to the pre-colonial military expeditions of the Gonja kingdom and their military alliances with the Ashanti. In addition, the Gonja permitted intermarriages among all tribes, thereby diluting the perceptions of exclusiveness between subjects and rulers. Moreover, the rebelling Vagalla constituted only one of many 'subject' tribes under Gonja tutelage - which included also the Lobi and Safalbas, among others, all of whom remained 'neutral' and 'loyal' to the Gonja nobility throughout the conflict. Thus the Vagalla rebellion was relatively easy to defeat.

By contrast, the Nanumba nobility was outnumbered by the rebelling Konkomba by four to one; and the Nanumba neither intermarried with the Konkomba nor patronized them

in the same way as the Gonja did their subjects. Hence, the feeling of exclusiveness was higher among the Konkomba, who constitute by far the largest single tribe in the Nanumba district, with a lot more of its members inhabiting most of the agricultural land in the Yendi district and parts of north-western Togo." As a result, a better orchestrated Konkomba revolt, better familiarity with the entire rural community of Nanumba against a Nanumba nobility in complete disarray at the onset of the Nanumba/Konkomba conflict," resulted in victory for the Konkomba.

Notwithstanding the different outcomes of these two conflicts, the peasant victory (in the case of the Konkomba), and the dramatic occurrence of a revolt against the Gonja, who prided themselves of good statesmanship, led to considerable changes in the social relations between peasants and their traditional rulers. Peter Skalnik has reported that

Konkomba settlers...tend no longer to recognize the Nanumba as the owners of land and have ceased to pay allegiance to the Bimbilla-Na (the paramount chief of Nanumba) and other Nanumba chiefs. Also, they no longer bring their marital and other cases for arbitration to the Nanumba chiefs and elders....

Nor do they render tributary payments and free labour services to their former Nanumba overlords. In that case at least, the Konkomba have not only succeeded in effectively possessing the lands which they settle and farm without an

obligation to pay rent to the Nanumba nobility, they have also attained a measure of political autonomy as Konkomba village heads now act as arbitrators and judges in areas previously reserved for the divisional and village chiefs appointed by the Nanumba.⁸⁶

Even in the case of the Vagalla, who suffered military defeat, the Gonja have now instituted some moderate changes in their relations so that consultation is now undertaken with 'subject' peoples before the appointment of village chiefs, some of whom can now be members of the tribes in question. There are also indications that the tributary payments required from their subjects have been reduced since the Gonja/Vagalla conflict.⁸⁷

In other parts of northern Ghana, where revolts of a Vagalla or Konkomba dimension have occurred, comparable changes in peasant relations with traditional rulers have followed.⁸⁸ This is especially the case in most Builsa communities in north-eastern Ghana where new chiefs have been enthroned by the Builsa people to compete with, and in some cases, remove existing chiefs who were the appointed representatives of the Mamprusi nobility.

Conclusion

Although state agrarian policies threatened the subsistence base of peasants in northern Ghana, the apparent success of peasant economic and political actions has had serious implications for agrarian stagnation and the centrality of the post-colonial state in the economic, as well as the political reproduction processes in the region. Peasant disengagement from the state-induced process of agricultural commoditization, their ability to avoid proletarianization and to reduce market relations, and the extension of the logic of peasant subsistence production through the emergence of the 'urban peasants', has had several noticeable effects.

First, under the prevailing condition of a reversion to subsistence production, it has been possible for individual peasant households to maintain their subsistence without increasing productivity per se. However, it has been shown that this subsistence stability did not always pertain. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, unprecedented spending on the state and urban sectors soaked the economy with liquidity and attracted more subsistence surpluses and labour to the market. The result

was that the capacity of the peasants to reproduce a stable subsistence was severely impaired.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, local peasant communities realigned their social, political and economic structures to expand their control over rural productive assets, especially land, and to resist their total subsumption under alternative forms of agricultural production introduced by the state. Thus, the rebuff by peasants of state efforts at transformation and the reaction of the lower urban salariat to the inadequacies of the state sector, further lessened the hold of the state apparatus on various production units. As Chazan put it,

[T]he conditionality...of association with the state which was characteristic of relations between locals and government in the past, was thereby mummified as conscious withdrawal from the state became an important coping mechanism in its own right.

In other words, production for subsistence has prevailed over production for exchange. Since transformation of the peasant form of production could not occur from within and did not occur from without, food production for the national market slid into stagnation. In this situation, peasant subsistence production survived in northern Ghana, but it was disarticulated from the urban economy and the state; a condition which prompted a new policy direction of

integrated rural development in the 1980s. The viability of this new approach to the development of the peasant sector of northern Ghana will be the focus of the next chapter.

Footnotes

1. The wide scale use of such techniques as shifting cultivation and bush fallow have become rational land-extensive techniques in the northern region context where land is effectively free and abundant.
2. A similar observation was made in the case of northern Nigeria. See Michael Watts, Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 187.
3. For details on colonial labour policy and its effects in northern Ghana, see Nii-K Plange, "Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1976; and his "Underdevelopment in northern Ghana: Natural Causes or Colonial Capitalism," Review of African Political Economy (May/December 1979), pp. 4-14. See also Ken Post, "Peasantization and Rural Political Movements in West Africa," Archives Europeennes De Sociologie Vol. XIII, No 1, 1972, pp 223-254.
4. Piet Konnings, "Peasantry and the State in Ghana: The Example of the Veve Irrigation Project in the Upper Region of Ghana," (Leiden: African Studies Centre, Wording Papers), # 5, 1981, pp. 14-19.
5. Max Owusu, "Ghana Today: An Outline of the Operation Feed Yourself Policy," Ghana Information Services Bulletin (Accra: Ghana Publishing Company, 1973), p. 8.
6. The front-runners of this group were mostly chiefs. Alhaji Sule, Gushie Na (chief of Gushie); and Dr. Arda, the Navropio (chief of Navrongo) were prominent capitalist farmers, and in the case of the latter, allocator of irrigated lands around the Tono Irrigation Project in the north-east of the region.
7. Shepherd (1981), op. cit., p. 177. For the first time since lands in the north were put under central government control, prerogatives over land allocation became one of the areas of conflict between the state, which continued to claim primary jurisdiction, and the traditional leaders in northern Ghana who were now aware of the importance of juridical control over land. Powerful lobbies emerged to influence and pressure the government into returning northern lands to the chiefs.
8. Nicholas Van Hear, " 'By-Day' Boys and 'Dariga' Men: Casual Labour versus Agricultural Capital in Northern Ghana," Review of African Political Economy, 31 (December 1984), p. 45.

9. Van Hear (1984), op. cit., p. 45.

10. All the peasants interviewed during the survey of peasants conducted in 1984 reported a significant decline in their yields in the last ten years prior to the interviews, and they attributed this decline primarily to the variability and uncertainty of rainfall. Of the one hundred peasants interviewed over ninety per cent had bad weather as one of the causes of low yields, but only forty per cent identified bad weather as the sole cause of low yields.

11. Anthony Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London: Longman Group Limited, 1973); and also Watts, op. cit., have both provided extensive critiques of the invalidity of claims that climatic fatalism explains much of the decline of peasant agriculture. For the application of similar arguments to northern Ghana, see Nii-K Plange, "Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana," Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1976.

12. Conversations with peasants who worked on capitalist rice farms revealed that, in most cases, they underestimated how much time they required to work on these farms. For most of these workers, the long hours (sometimes days) spent waiting for transport to and from capitalist farms were not counted in the calculation of their daily wages. Consequently, they neither worked on their own farms nor obtained compensation for time lost in transit to the capitalist farms.

13. Twenty-five percent of the one hundred rural-based male farmers interviewed in 1984 reported having worked as casual laborers on 'big' rice farms between 1970 and 1984, although only eight percent indicated that they had accepted farm contracts requiring them to work more or less permanently on these farms in return for rice and cash wages. Similarly, nearly all of the forty females interviewed reported having worked as casual or permanent laborers on rice farms during the same period. Only two of the forty women had never worked on other farms for wages - one of them was a chief's wife and the other indicated that she travels quite often to do her retail trading business.

14. One notable example of urban-based secondary industries which expanded during this period was way-side mechanics in response to the increase of tractors, combine harvesters, passenger and private motor vehicles.

15. Although there are no precise figures on the gender and age distribution of the rural-urban exodus during this period, overwhelming evidence suggests that more women and children could be found at the 'by-day junctions' (that is,

the pick-up points for day casual workers designated for rice fields). Generally, the pick-up points were located in the cities and towns as convenient points for transport. Therefore, these women and children were not necessarily permanent residents of the towns.

16. This distinction was also observed by Ann Whitehead in her study of the Kusasi in north-east Ghana, see Ann Whitehead, "I'm hungry mum': The Politics of Domestic Budgeting," in K. Young, C. Wolkowitz and R. McCulloch, eds., Of Marriage and the Market: Womens' Subordination in International Perspective (London: SCE Books, 1981) pp. 88-111, especially, pp. 94-95.

17. Shenton and Lennihan made similar observations about the shift from larger extended family "gandu" and a smaller more independent nuclear family in rural northern Nigeria. See Robert Shenton and Louise Lennihan, "Capital and Class: Peasant Differentiation in Northern Nigeria," Journal of Peasant Studies, 9, 1(October 1981), pp. 64-65.

18. Mamdani has observed a similar process in the changing social structure of peasants in Uganda. See Mahmood Mamdani, "Extreme but not Exceptional: Towards an Analysis of the Agrarian Question in Uganda," Journal of Peasant Studies, 14, 2 (January 1987), p. 220.

19. Shepherd, writing about the 'hey day' of rice in northern Ghana has demonstrated how widespread rice cultivation was among rich farmers. However cost limitations prevented peasant farmers from participating in rice farming. Andrew Shepherd, "Agrarian Change in Northern Ghana: Public Investment, Capitalist Farming and Famine," in Judith Heyer, et. al., Rural Development in Tropical Africa (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), pp.176-178. Moreover, the fact that most peasant farmers traditionally saw rice as a luxury elite food (rather than part of the local diet), made rice cultivation less popular.

20. Goody, Van Hear, and Shepherd have all observed this phenomenal withdrawal of male labour from wage labour obligations on rich farms, see Shepherd (1981), op. cit.; Jack Goody, "Rice-Burning and the Green Revolution in Northern Ghana," Journal of Development Studies, 16, 2 (January 1980); Nick Van Hear, "Child Labour and the Development of Capitalist Agriculture in Ghana," Development and Change 13, 4(1982), pp. 499-514, and his "'By-Day' Boys and Dariga Men: Casual Labour versus Agrarian Capital in Northern Ghana," Review of African Political Economy, 31(December 1984) pp. 44-56.

21. Of the forty women interviewed in 1984, thirty-five had worked regularly on capitalist rice farms between 1970 and 1980, and more than half had continued to do so even as the males withdrew from these commitments.

22. Indeed, eighteen percent of the farmers interviewed engaged extra labour (beyond household labour) during such peak periods of cultivation. This labour is often obtained from kin groups within the same village and from neighboring villages (mostly in-laws). This practice did not result in the emergence of a labour market in the rural areas as most of the extra labour was secured through reciprocal work-sharing arrangements and only occasionally were cash wages paid.

23. Even under conditions of stress and imminent famine during the 1973/74 drought, seventy-five per cent of the peasants interviewed still retained this hierarchy of importance in labour allocation.

24. Whitehead has observed with reference to the Kusasi area of northern Ghana that, despite the fact that both men and women produce agricultural products, the perception in northern Ghana is that "women are not really recognized as farmers at all." Whitehead, op. cit., p. 96.

25. However, their wage labour commitments notwithstanding, all the women surveyed continued to fulfil their labour time obligations on their family farms. The nine women who indicated that they no longer worked on rice farms did so for reasons other than conflict with their family farm obligations. While some cited employers callousness, others could not find work close to their villages due to fewer farms in their immediate reach.

26. The same mechanism formed an important foundation in South African capitalism, where labour-power is reproduced in the Bantustans and in the border states for the mines and agricultural estates. For details of the South African case, see Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," Economy and Society, 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425-456.

27. Van Hear (1982; and 1984), op. cit., has demonstrated how capitalist rice farmers resorted to various tactics of avoiding the payment of competitive wages to their workers, including outright refusal to pay.

28. Most large rice farmers who hired labour during this period indicated that their preference had always been for adult male workers, preferably those with prior farming experience. However, these were more difficult to find and when they were, the cost of such labour was prohibitive.

Furthermore, the older and more experienced female workers on capitalist farms continued to perform their labour and other social obligations in support of their own family farms. The oscillation of female labour between family farms and wage labour made it an unstable basis for a permanent labour market.

29. Goody (1980), op. cit., concluded that the practice of crop destruction by arsonists made large-scale capitalist farming quite risky in northern Ghana.

30. Harriet Friedmann, "Household Production and the National Economy: Concepts for the Analysis of Agrarian Formations," Journal of Peasant Studies, 7, 2(January 1980), p. 163.

31. All the farmers interviewed not only reported sharply declining yields over the ten year period prior to 1984, they also reported selling far less food to the market by retaining the bulk of their produce for household consumption

32. In September 1983, the price for a bag of maize at Tamale had shot up to between 10,000 - 12,000 Ghanaian cedis from a mere 2,000 cedis a year earlier. Evidence from interviews in several market traders.

33. The relationship between agricultural prices and productivity has been the focus of several studies on small holder agriculture in Africa, and these have concluded that higher prices would stimulate higher peasant productivity. Notable among these studies are, Dharam Ghai and Lawrence Smith, Agricultural Prices, Policies and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1987); and Robert Bates and Michael Lofchie, eds., Agricultural Development in Africa: Issues in Public Policy (New York: Praeger, 1980); and Robert Bates, Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

34. This conclusion was implicit in Hyden's work on peasants in Tanzania. See Hyden (1980), op. cit.

35. Friedmann (1980), op. cit.

36. This refers to the ratio of agricultural produce sold to the equivalent commodities that could be attainable with the returns.

37. In the interview of northern Ghanaian peasants, sixty-five percent linked their decision to sell less to lack of consumer goods, twenty percent of the farmers cited the lack

of farm inputs and the remaining fifteen percent indicated that their total production fell so low that they could not afford to sell anything to the market.

38. Many rural-based peasant farmers indicated that at the peak of the food shortages in Ghana in 1982-83, they persistently turned down huge sums of money offered to them by desperate consumers from Tamale and southern towns in return for a portion of their food and seed in storage.

39. Evidence from interviews in the northern region, 1984.

40. Schejtman has observed that peasant decisions concerning what to produce are not based on the marketability of the product, but on its role in supporting the family and the production unit. See Alexander Schejtman, "The Peasant Economy: Internal Logic, Articulation, and Persistence," in Charles Wilber (ed.), The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment (3rd. edition). New York: Random House, 1984, p. 281.

41. In June 1979 and again in December 1981 when radical military elements came to power in Ghana, more extreme measures were adopted in dealing with people who were caught 'hoarding' food. These included the demolition of houses in which food was stored and the burning of markets. The entire market in Tamale was burned down in 1982.

42. Several farmers reported their seeds being seized.

43. As Hyden observed, the peasant exit option is not always feasible, especially in an agricultural system such as that in Kenya where more integration has occurred between the peasantry and the formal economy. Even there, Christopher Leo has indicated that independent peasants with their own land are still able to exercise some measure of relative autonomy from market forces. See Goran Hyden, "The Invisible Economy of Smallholder Agriculture in Africa," in Joyce Moock, ed., Understanding Africa's Rural Households and Farming Systems (Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 11-35; and Christopher Leo, Land and Class in Kenya (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), especially the introduction, pp. 3-23.

44. A village chief, recounted an incident in which a native of the village, having worked abroad for a number of years, returned to acquire land in his area for a cattle ranch. He indicated to the chief however that he needed several hectares of land to cultivate maize which, in turn, would be used as cattle feed. The chief informed him politely that he would make more money selling the maize

rather than wasting his time feeding it to the cattle. This candid fact illustrates the extent to which there was no advantage to the peasants in delaying benefits by investing in technical improvements to the means of production.

45. Naomi Chazan, An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982 (Colorado: Westview, 1983), p. 191.

46. Evidence was gathered during conversations with staff of various Government Ministries in the summer of 1984.

47. Cited in UNICEF, "Adjustment Policies and Programs to Protect Children and other Vulnerable Groups in Ghana," unpublished mimeo, Accra, 1987, pp. 144-145.

48. Only two out of the sixty farmers interviewed in this category actually resigned their jobs.

49. Several strategies were adopted to secure nearly permanent absence from their regular jobs. These included perpetual sick leave during farming season and the bribing of superiors. At one point during the interviews, a senior official at the Ministry of Agriculture in Tamale informed me that nearly all of his staff were out of the offices working on their farms at most times. The government had to compromise with this trend in the 1984 farming season by allowing one day off work for civil servants to go to their farms.

50. Averages were computed from responses of the interviews with the two categories of peasants.

51. For details on the internal differentiation among peasants in the cocoa sector of southern Ghana, see Rhoda Howard, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana (London: Croom Helm, 1978) and her "Formation and Stratification of the Peasantry in Colonial Ghana," Journal of Peasant Studies, 8, 1 (October 1980), pp. 61-80; and Polly Hill, Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), especially chapter two, "Ghanaian capitalist cocoa-farmers," pp. 21-29.

52. Since the early 1970s, urban farmers have begun to appear in significant numbers in many African countries including Tanzania and Zambia. Their increasing prominence in agricultural production has therefore generated renewed interest in their future prospects. See especially, Henry Bernstein, "Capitalism and Petty Commodity Production," The Journal of Social Studies, 36 (April 1987); Luis Llambi, "Small Modern Farmers: Neither Peasants nor Fully-Fledged Capitalists? A Theoretical and Historical Discussion,"

Journal of Peasant Studies, 15, 3 (April 1988), pp. 350-372; and also Robert Berg and Jennifer Whitaker (eds.), Strategies for African Development, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, especially pp. 155-275.

53. Evidence from interviews in the northern region, 1984.

54. More than half of the sixty urban-based farmers interviewed reported one form indebtedness or another.

55. Only three of the sixty farmers owned tractors on a co-operative basis with other farmers.

56. This observation was also made by Shepherd (1981), op. cit., pp. 177-178.

57. The practice of rice burning has been discussed in detail by Goody (1980), op. cit. Van Hear (1984), op. cit. also discusses the extent to which tensions existed between urban employers and farm workers.

58. Most respondents during my interviews reported that only those who had farms or had a lot of money were spared the hunger of 1982-83.

59. Although in relative terms the urban-based farmers reported selling more to the market than their rural counterparts, the wider variety of demands that they spent money on - consumer goods, school fees, taxes and transportation - made their incomes from food sales negligible

60. Jairus Banaji, "Modes of Production in a Materialist Conception of History," Capital and Class, 3 (Autumn 1977), p. 33.

61. For a discussion of the Gonja/Vagalla conflict, see Donald Ray, "The PNDC, Traditional Structures and Development in Daboya, Ghana," (unpublished mimeo, 1984a).

62. On the Nanumba-Konkomba conflict, see Peter Skalnik, "Questioning the concept of the state in indigenous Africa," Social Dynamics, 9, 2 (December 1983).

63. Saaka, op. cit.; and Mahama have detailed the relationship between the Gonja nobility and the Vagalla commoners. see John Mahama, "The Vagalla and the Coming of the Gonja," (Unpublished B.A. dissertation, University of Ghana, Accra, 1981). The Nanumba believe the Konkomba are a settler tribe who do not own land in the area they settled.

64. Donald Ray, "The State Traditional Authority and Development in Ghana," Paper presented at the 14th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, May 11, 1984b, p. 12.

65. Excerpt from a speech by Mahama Dasana, Regent of Bimbilla (representative of the Nanumba paramount chief) on the occasion of the visit of the State President, Dr. Hilla Limann, to the Nanumba District Capital. 11th July 1981, in records of the Nanumba Traditional Council, Bimbilla.

66. There had been sustained pressure on the government by northern elites, coordinated by the Northern Study Group and the Northern and Upper Region House of chiefs to return northern lands to the control of traditional rulers. The Alhassani Commission on Northern Lands made a strong recommendation to this effect in 1978, a recommendation incorporated in the 1979 constitutional Proposal drafted by the Constituent Assembly. See Government of Ghana, Recommendations for Constitution of the Interim Government of Ghana, Accra, 1978, pp. 108-109.

67. Mahama, op. cit., pp. 39-46.

68. Speech by the Regent of Bimbilla to the President, op. cit.

69. Speech by Bimbilla-Naa Dasana Abdulai (paramount chief of Nanumba) on the occasion of the visit of the Volta Regional Minister to Bimbilla, Nanumba District, May 21, 1981. Located in Nanumba Traditional Council records, Bimbilla

70. A number of Konkombas indicated that more services and traditional payments were being required by the Nanumba chiefs. As well, they complained of compulsory court fees which were being charged by Nanumba chiefs to arbitrate Konkomba cases. These charges were denied by Nanumba chiefs. See Bimbilla-Naa's speech to the President, op. cit.

71. Several high ranking government officials and military officers farmed in the fertile valleys around the Damongo area. Moreover, in anticipation of the return of northern lands to the chiefs, the Gonja paramountcy was said to be involved in negotiations for the payment of millions of cedis in royalties to the Gonja Traditional Council for leases on the several hundred square mile Mole Game Reserve in Gonja territory.

72. Government of Ghana, Constitution of the Third Republic, Accra, 1978.

73. Both sides in the conflict made charges and counter-charges about each others' intent and motives.

74. Many Konkombas saw the government directive for the creation of Peoples' Committees as a way of legitimizing their pre-existing village organizations which were viewed with suspicion by the Nanumba nobility. Evidence from interviews in the Nanumba District, June 1981 and July to August 1984.

75. No doubt, Nanumba traditional leaders and, in particular, the paramount chief, blamed the 1979 Rawlings revolution as being responsible for the upsurge of rebellious incidents in the area.

76. One of the key organizers of the Konkomba Youth Association and an architect of the Konkomba uprising against the Nanumba nobility was Colonel Nyanle. Nyanle, then an army officer, also served as a representative of the Government of the AFRC in the area in 1979. Later, it was alleged that he directed the Konkomba war machine during their conflict with the Nanumba in 1981. Source: Interviews with Nanumba in 1981 and 1984.

77. The government's initial directives for the formation of PDCs prohibited individuals holding traditional or secular authority from becoming members. Hence, the PDCs which were formed among the Konkomba, Vagalla, and Kusasi where peasants were in conflict with the nobility, tended to compete with the traditional authorities, while those in areas of relative tranquility such as Dagomba and some parts of Gonja co-operated with the traditional authorities. Evidence from a series of interviews in the Eastern Dagomba and Nanumba districts, 1984.

78. Interviews with staff members of the Nanumba and Dagomba East District Administrative offices in Bimbilla and Yendi, July and August 1984.

79. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church agricultural extension station in Yendi has undertaken extensive training of Konkomba farmers in the use of bullock ploughs. This has resulted in a more positive perception among the peasants about mission activities. Evidence from visits to some of the Church Agricultural Projects (CAP) in the region, 1984.

80. Ray (1984b), op. cit., p. 16.

81. Peter P. Dery, "Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana," an address given by the Catholic Archbishop of Tamale to the Annual Convention of the Northern Students' Union in Tamale, December 27-29, 1981, p. 1.

82. Peter Dery (1981), op. cit., p. 2.

83. During the actual combat, the stretch of Konkomba settlements into parts of Togo allowed them to move back and forth. As a result, the Nanumba nobility alleged external influence in support of the rebelling Konkomba. It was claimed by people in Bimbilla that arms were being supplied by Togolese authorities to Konkomba fighters. Evidence from interviews in Bimbilla, 1981 and 1984.

84. A few days after the start of hostilities between the Nanumba and Konkomba, the paramount chief of the Nanumba died suddenly after one of his oldest sons had been murdered by a Konkomba. This created a power vacuum among the Nanumba nobil

85. Skalnik, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

86. Evidence to this effect was provided by both Konkomba and Nanumba leaders.

87. Although this evidence could not be verified from any Vagalla respondents, the overwhelming feeling among the Gonja I interviewed was one of restraint rather than retributi

88. Since the two conflicts, there have been other similar conflicts throughout northern Ghana - in Bolgatanga, Wa and Bawku where 'subject' peoples, most of them direct peasant producers, are resisting their domination by non-producing aristocracies. The most volatile of these have been between the aristocratic Mamprusi and their 'subject' tribes to the north-east, most of which have been ruled by the Mamprusi for the last century.

89. Chazan (1983), op. cit., p. 201.

CHAPTER V

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT: THE DILEMMA OF THE 1980s

The economic and political crises in the northern Ghanaian countryside provided the context for the most comprehensive attempt at state intervention in peasant production yet. The Northern Region Rural Integrated Program (NORRIP), initiated in 1980 by the Ghanaian state in partnership with Canadian aid, was conceived as a multi-sectoral state response to the crisis of agrarian stagnation. However, the adoption at the same time of the most far-reaching IMF-inspired structural adjustment program at the national level has set limits on the viability of the rural development efforts promoted by NORRIP. The structural adjustment program seeks to promote economic growth and recovery on the basis of the traditional export sectors of cocoa production, mining and logging in southern Ghana while NORRIP focuses on enhancing peasant production of food crops for domestic consumption.

This chapter analyses the impact of these two tendencies on the peasant social formation of northern Ghana. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first examines the rationale for a rural development strategy for northern Ghana in terms of the diverse social and political

pressures within the region which brought the north into prominence nationally and influenced the allocation of more resources for its development. Here it is argued that while the primary motivation for NORRIP was political, the state's long term economic interests of fostering the cohesion of the whole socio-economic formation by (re)integrating elements of the peasant mode of production into the market influenced the implementation of the program. In this context, the NORRIP must be evaluated in terms of its immediate and long term impact on the peasant agrarian structure in the northern region and, in particular, on its potential for introducing changes in the peasant relations of production.

The second section deals with the effect of structural adjustment on the country as a whole and, in particular, on the peasant food sector in northern Ghana. It is argued that the export-bias of structural adjustment policies has altered the costs and availability of inputs to peasant food producers. In order to understand the contradiction arising from state support for an integrated rural development program in the north and an export oriented structural adjustment policy for the rest of the country, let us examine how diverse regional political interests in national government affected overall development policies in Ghana.

The Political Bases of a Regional Development Strategy for the Northern Region

Between 1978 and 1982, the central government in Ghana was politically unstable¹ and its fiscal viability was destroyed by a sharp decline in the real price of the country's main export, cocoa.² The systematic erosion of central state authority which afflicted Ghana during this period allowed the emergence and consolidation of regional factions within the central government. In this generally chaotic political and economic situation, the centrifugal pressures on state resource allocation became so strong that the state was forced to support regionally-based development initiatives. In northern Ghana, these tendencies emerged in the form of intense grassroots protests in the northern countryside and in the shape of a brief period of significant northern influence in the national government. Let us examine some of the factors which characterized the rise of northern prominence in the central government.

After the 1972 coup d'état which overthrew the Government of Dr. Busia, which had been dominated by the Akan (southern Ghana-based) Progress Party, northerners became more politically powerful in national politics. Two main factors accounted for this shift in national political influence between 1972 and 1979. First, the army, which had

come to play a decisive role in national politics, had a large number of influential officers who now exerted a decisive northern influence on national decision making. Second, at the beginning of 1977, when the Government of General Acheampong was besieged by widespread opposition to its policies from the traditional bases of power in southern Ghana - cocoa producers, urban workers, university students and professionals, it sought support and legitimacy among the traditional ruling groups (Chiefs) in northern Ghana.

The increased northern influence in the Acheampong Government, in particular, and its increased access to resources strengthened northern chiefs and educated 'notables' in business, agriculture, government, and the army. These northern interests played a significant role in the formulation of the proposals for a "Union Government" comprising of soldiers, chiefs and civilian politicians. For the first time since the colonial state proped-up northern chiefs and institutionalized their authority in the NTC, the new system of government proposed by General Acheampong presented the chiefs with an opportunity to secure political office without contesting through national elections. Thus, the north voted 'yes' in the March 1978 referendum in support of Acheampong's plan.'

TABLE 14

Results by Region of the Ghana Referendum
on Union Government, 30 March 1978

Region	Number	<u>Yes</u>	Number	<u>No</u>
		% of votes		% of votes
Brong-Ahafo	65,158	31.9	138,820	68.1
Ashanti	142,795	45.6	170,122	54.4
Eastern	118,949	45.5	142,027	54.5
Volta	102,111	52.5	92,062	47.5
Upper	174,154	78.0	49,101	22.0
Northern	143,144	74.7	48,472	25.3
Western	122,606	70.9	50,229	29.1
Central	116,100	60.3	76,386	39.7
Greater Accra	118,406	51.1	113,036	49.9
Total	1,103,423	55.5	880,255	44.5

Source: Adapted from Naomi Chazan, An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982. Colorado: Westview, 1983, p. 265.

As Table 14 shows, an average of seventy-six per cent of voters in the two northern regions (North and Upper) endorsed the proposed concept of Union Government, compared with a marginal national average of 55.5 per cent in favour.

Another manifestation of an increase of northern influence in national politics was demonstrated by the

northern domination of the leadership of the major political parties who vied for power during the 1979 general elections. At the time, all the political parties viewed northerners as holding the balance of power in a country overwhelmingly dominated by politics in the south which, at the time, was polarized along tribal and ethnic lines. Two of the leaders of the five prominent parties were northerners as were three of the five leading contenders for the vice-presidency. The increasing importance of the 'northern' factor in national affairs was demonstrated most vividly by the struggle over the leadership of the Peoples' National Party (PNP), then the only truly national party and by the significance that workers from the north played in the emergence of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) which had strong ties with the trade union movement.

Of those who founded the PNP, Alhaji Imoro Egala, a northerner with strong political ties dating back to the Nkrumah Government, was the most prominent and it was hoped that he would lead the party. However, when he was prohibited from holding any public office by a ruling against him,⁴ the nomination of Dr. Hilla Limann, another northerner who had not even been considered for the position, bore testimony to the influence and appeal of the northern leadership in the party and the country. Subsequently, Dr. Limann won the presidential elections and

his party, the PNP, won a large majority in the parliamentary elections as can be seen in Table 15.

TABLE 15
Results of 1979 Parliamentary Elections in Ghana

Regions	PNP	PFP	<u>Parties</u>		SDF	TFP	IND.
			UNC	ACP			
Central	8	--	--	7	--	--	--
Greater Accra	6	1	3	--	--	--	--
Eastern	11	6	4	--	--	--	--
Ashanti	2	19	1	--	--	--	--
Brong-Ahafo	2	10	--	--	--	--	1
Volta	11	--	5	--	--	--	--
North	7	4	--	--	3	--	--
Upper	15	1	--	--	--	--	--
Western	9	1	--	3	--	--	--
Total	71	42	13	10	3	0	1

Source: Naomi Chazan, An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982.
Colorado: Westview, 1983, p. 265.

While the electoral victory of Dr. Limann and the PNP was reflective of the party's national outlook (as opposed to the more narrow regional bases of its opponents), the appeal of the northern leadership and its mobilization of a large number of migrant workers in the mines, cocoa

plantations and public works departments in the urban centres of southern Ghana, partly explains the party's victory. In the past, these migrants, most of them from northern Ghana, had been effectively marginalized in national politics. But in this period, they were politically mobilized in support of the PNP.

An important vehicle in the mobilization of these workers was the Trade Union Congress (TUC) which, at the time, was headed by Alhaji A.M. Issifu, a northerner whose position as Secretary-General was secured through the large number of northerners in the mining and public works unions affiliated to the TUC. Although founder of the pro-labour Social Democratic Front, Issifu's political machine became aligned to Limann's PNP once the race for the presidency narrowed down to a choice between the leader of the PNP and Victor Owusu, leader of the largely Akan-based Popular Front Party (PFP).⁵

Northern political influence in national politics was further enhanced by the presence of a powerful lobby of northern interests within the state apparatus co-ordinated by a prominent elite group, "The Northern Study Group".⁶ This group, appearing to be independent of the government, presented detailed briefs on specific development projects for northern Ghana and then lobbied the government for their

speedy implementation and for further projects in the region.' Thus, it was within this context of rising northern political prominence that the NORRIP initiative was sponsored by northern interests in the central government as an opportunity to increase resource flows to their region. However, the appeal of a massive integrated rural development program transcended these particular regional political interests. NORRIP reflected national interests as well: to arrest the recession of peasant agriculture in the region and to stimulate the production of marketed food in the long run. Let us examine the rationale for these economic motivations.

The Great Northern Plan

When NORRIP was launched in September 1980, its stated objective was:

...to assist the government of Ghana to effect socio-economic changes in the interests of the subsistence farmer in northern region by improving the basic infrastructure (water, transport) and availability of social service facilities thereby stimulating agricultural production as well as increased employment opportunities in relation to agro-industrial processing sectors within the region.'

The program's conception was sweeping - its mandate was to design a development program covering the spheres of production, distribution and consumption taking into account

social, cultural, and political factors in the development of subsistence agriculture.'

From 1980 to 1988, NORRIP went through two planning phases. During the first phase (1980-1983), a broad overview of the development problems and prospects of the northern region was elaborated after intensive field studies were conducted throughout the region. This planning phase resulted in the formulation of an integrated rural development strategy and the specification of broad investment plans in a number of sectors.¹⁰ The second planning phase (1984-1988) prepared specific project packages for two out of ten districts designated as Integrated Development Areas in the northern region."

While a description of the specific components of NORRIP is outside the scope of this study, it is useful to examine its analysis of the problem of rural stagnation in the northern region, which constitutes the program's rationale. Thereafter, we will discuss the program's approach to rural integrated development in order to understand the potential impact of NORRIP on the peasantry of the northern region.

Unlike the conventional wisdom on rural development which associates traditional peasant practices

with backwardness and then seeks to modernize these practices in order to transform peasant society," the NORRIP program identified the main constraints to the development of peasant productivity as being the poorly functioning regional and national administrative systems. NORRIP argued that

As the modern sector has deteriorated, there has been a reversion to traditional systems which have become more important as levers for development. ... There have been some innovative adaptive responses to the existing situation by the informal sector. For a variety of reasons, the public sector has not been able to respond effectively to the existing situation and this has increased the reversion to and dependence on traditional practices.

This analysis led to the conclusion that the informal peasant sector, rather than the former state-supported commercial farming sector, should be the main focus of policies to improve agricultural productivity.

Several levels of intervention in peasant agriculture were proposed by NORRIP. At the farm level, animal traction was encouraged, farm credit schemes were proposed, and social amenity programs to provide safe drinking water, primary health care and adult basic literacy were envisaged. While the potential impact of these measures on the peasantry will be examined more closely below, it is important to note that such measures were not new to the northern region, nor were they unique. Support for animal traction started in northern Ghana as far back as

the 1930s when the colonial government introduced bullock training schemes in the north-east. This was continued on a relatively experimental scale by the Presbyterian Mission Agricultural Extension Station in Yendi, and lately reintroduced by the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Program in parts of the northern region. Farm credit schemes for peasant farmers were also started in the 1950s by the colonial government in the Western Dagomba area of northern Ghana."

What was new in NORRIP was the fundamental shift from bypassing traditional cultivators characterized through alternative forms of production, to a policy encouraging peasant production itself. The operative concept was 'integration' expressed both in institutional and ideological terms. NORRIP has been designed to integrate all state institutions in the region to support one coherent thrust in regional development. Thus, NORRIP's agricultural initiatives - the coordination of extension services and the provision of food aid relief to farmers during the 'hunger gap' - were to be handled by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Potable Water Program which was to drill three hundred and fifty boreholes fitted with hand pumps involved the Ghana Water and Sewage Corporation, and the Primary Health Care Program was to be implemented by the Ministry of Health. The transport package to construct, maintain, and

rehabilitate bush tracks, feeder roads and arteries was to bring together a host of Ministries including those of Works and Housing and the Ghana Highways Authority. By 1984, what emerged as the NORRIP master plan was so all-encompassing that top officials of traditional government ministries resigned their positions or were co-opted to work on the program which was expected to become the focal point of all activities in the region.¹⁵

Complementing this institutional integration was a more fundamental goal, namely, to enable peasant surpluses to be produced and marketed with better roads and amenities - water, health and education - provided to the rural communities.¹⁶ To achieve this aim, NORRIP planners have advocated a 'buffer systems program' consisting of fuel storage, inventories of spare parts, and plant and machinery pools to make the northern region more self-sufficient and less dependent on inputs from southern Ghana.¹⁷

Thus, NORRIP's plan is to increase peasant productivity without dramatically altering the structures of peasant production. The idea is not so much to transform the rural peasant economy, but rather to enhance its productivity and, to make its surpluses available for the wider urban sector.¹⁸ This goal is related to the

assumption that the changes anticipated under NORRIP can be grafted on to 'subsistence' production without a significant impact on the pattern of production in the region. In fact, the program has implied that there is no significant possibilities of change in the rural economy.

The village in the northern region is unlikely to become significantly wealthier in the short to medium run. It will continue to exist as a subsistence economic unit with some ties to the modern sector in terms of purchase of commodities such as salt, sugar, fuel for the odd tractor or motor bike, ... and the sale of limited agricultural surpluses. On the other hand, because of its resilience, it is unlikely to become significantly poorer in the near to medium future..."

Yet, a closer analysis of NORRIP's intervention in the northern Ghanaian countryside reveals a great potential for the increase in peasant productivity due to the introduction of animal traction²⁰ and, consequently, rural economic differentiation arising from the control of this new technology by male elders and traditional leaders.

Though predating NORRIP, the use of animal traction in the northern region is rapidly spreading. Already, several Bullock Farmers' Associations have been formed in the Yendi district for training in bullock farming techniques. These associations have obtained implements, seeds and fertilizers at highly subsidized prices from the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Program and the

Mission Agricultural Stations and so far seem to be receptive to the new technology."

Thus, with the appeal of government subsidies, the number of farmers involved in animal traction has increased as has the demand for farm equipment, animals for traction, improved seeds and fertilizers. Cognizant of the needs for capital to acquire these inputs, NORRIP has admitted that "... even bullocks are becoming very expensive", and that, since only a few farmers can afford to own them,

... the introduction of bullocks in villages ... produces an 'elite' group who no longer depend on help from other villagers. This tends to disrupt the social order of the village."

To understand the alterations in the peasant social structure introduced by an increased surplus arising from better technology, it is important to consider the changing role of village community leaders (elders and chiefs) in rural northern Ghana. Although in the past the traditional peasant unit of production was characterized by incipient exploitation along the lines of gender, social age and traditional status, so long as the peasant household produced only marginal surpluses, their appropriation did not accentuate economic divisions within the villages for several reasons. First, the position of community leaders did not correspond to significant divisions at the level of production; that is, their dominant role in society did not

depend on their exclusive ownership of the means of production. Furthermore, their accumulation of use values was mitigated by their social obligations to redistribute subsistence goods among the less fortunate members of the community. However, with the potential for the production of larger surpluses through the widespread use of better farm technology, the selective and exclusive ownership of this new means of production by male elders and traditional leaders has introduced individual proprietary rights and a basis of accumulation along narrow economic lines."

Such internal differentiation has been enhanced by the introduction of credit facilities. While starting with only an initial \$1.2 million, the scheme has now been adopted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with an \$16 million grant and plans are underway for additional funds from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).⁴⁴ In the absence of collateral to secure loans to peasant farmers, the so-called 'Small Farmer Group Loans Scheme' administered by the Agricultural Development Bank and the Ghana Commercial Bank requires that groups of small farmers guarantee each others' loans. This has meant that loan recipients, mostly household heads and traditional leaders, mortgage the present and future produce of their family members for these financial resources." In the long-run, increasing

indebtedness among the peasants and a greater reliance on credit financing can be expected. However, while the entire household becomes indebted through this scheme, the real effects of servicing bank loans through the sale of more household produce are felt by the fraction of the peasants who do not have access to the new technology - the women.

Thus, the changes in the pattern of control of rural productive assets have been characterized by a male bias in the distribution of these assets. In addition and facilitating this bias, animal traction technology has been directed almost exclusively at male household heads and traditional leaders.²⁶ There were no female members in all the Bullock Farmers' Associations encountered in the Yendi district. In the northern region, women are not permitted to own or operate ox-drawn ploughs due to a mixed blend of religious and 'mystical' excuses. In any case, women do not own farms in the formal sense in most of the northern region. This is in contrast with the adjacent upper-east region where, due to the high rate of male migration, women not only own farms, but own and operate ox-drawn ploughs as well.

Thus, while the new technology has made male labour in land clearing and ploughing a lot easier and access to farm credit facilities has made their agricultural

endeavors potentially more lucrative, women continue the laborious and tedious job of planting, harvesting, transporting, and processing food. Moreover, female access to farm credit has been constrained by their traditional designation as non-farm owners.

To redress this disproportionate advantage that improved farm technology and credit facilities may have for men, NORRIP has concluded that,

... it is essential that women be reached with developmental programs so that they can play an essential role in the growing of protein rich vegetables and beans. Water programs and community forestry programs which reduce the time women spend fetching wood and water, will enable women to spend more time growing vegetables thus generating a significant impact on village nutrition.

Consequently, the priority placed on the installation of water pumps in villages throughout the north is expected to result in a significant time release for women, as it did in the adjacent upper region where a CIDA-funded rural water supply program has freed up about thirty per cent of the time that women spent in the traditional chore of fetching water from distant locations.²⁸ In addition, women-oriented development initiatives are now being supported throughout the region. The most extensive of these programs is a \$5 million CIDA-funded small credit scheme for rural women administered by the Canadian non-governmental organization (CUSO) and the National Council

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for Women and Development (NCWD) in the northern region. Thus, time release for women and the corresponding availability of credit facilities are expected to lead to their greater participation in agricultural production and to the expansion of traditional agro-based cottage industries such as food and shea butter processing for the urban market.

It should be evident, then, that NORRIP's plan to intervene in the northern Ghanaian countryside through the provision of credit and better technology to individual family members will lead to a gradual breakdown of community structures of reciprocity and self-reliance as the household's relations of production become mediated by powerful elders not only by virtue of their traditional status and social obligations but by virtue of their ownership of the means of production as well. As well, the conditions needed for the reproduction of the household will become increasingly dependent on inputs and facilities whose maintenance will rely more on factors external to the household."

Furthermore, the fact that villages will begin to function according to an organized plan under NORRIP opens up the possibility for a restructuring of the economic relations and exchanges among villages as well as between

villages and towns. Thus, the voluntary reciprocity in the circulation of labour and subsistence goods that characterized the traditional peasant society is likely to be diminished as compulsive market relationships that are unmitigated by the 'subsistence ethic' prevail. As Von Freyhold observed with reference to Tanzania,

... the dependency and underdevelopment of the peasantry are primarily represented through the types of links which allow only for trade in the kind of crops which the privileged urban strata need, links which are unresponsive to the productive requirements and possibilities of the peasants and which serve as channels by which the surplus is drained away from the peasants."

When peasants become involved in such commercial transactions, their patterns of production and social relationships are altered, and conflicts between previously established patterns of subsistence production and the new requirements of commodity production for sale are likely to reduce their viability, welfare and resilience. The greater intrusion of external market forces in the northern Ghanaian countryside is accompanied by the prospect of an influx of urban residents into the peasant sector.

The approach to be adopted by NORRIP (and embraced by other donors in the region) of opening up the rural economy through improvements in transport and communication, the restoration of broken dams and the construction of

irrigation facilities, is likely to serve as an incentive for more urban dwellers to engage in agricultural cultivation and for the removal of more peasant surpluses to the market. As shown in chapter four, the peasant ranks in northern Ghana have already increased as a result of the influx of urban dwellers into agricultural production in order to provide for their subsistence food needs. To the extent that there is easier access to land throughout northern Ghana, adequate rural facilities and social amenities (particularly good drinking water in villages), direct motorable roads to and from farms, agricultural extension and farm credit facilities, the trend of urban participation in the rural economy will increase considerably.

In fact, if the previous experience of the Agricultural Development Bank and the region's commercial banks is anything to go by, invariably, urban residents with personal and business relations with bank officials end up with a substantial amount of the finance and credit earmarked for small peasant farmers.³¹ This being the case, the increasing participation of urban residents in rural agricultural production could result in the emergence of a class of middle peasants, hiring labour and using modern farm techniques and increasing the proportion of commodities

they sell in the more accessible regional and national markets.

However, the process of rural economic differentiation and class formation in northern Ghana is a highly discontinuous and contradictory one. While the increased market participation of peasants and the influx of urban residents into agricultural production may lead ultimately to major transformations in the patterns of peasant production, this process will not inevitably create a group of capitalist farmers and landless (or nearly landless) wage laborers in the rural areas. Three interrelated variables set limits on the spread of commodity production and consequent disintegration of the peasantry in northern Ghana. The first is a high degree of peasant autonomy from other classes, the state and the market; the second is the risks associated with expanding their involvement in commodity production; and, the third is the sustainability of the external political and economic context motivating the changes in the pattern of rural development in the region. Understanding the significance of these factors is important in portraying how peasants have interacted with the state and capital under different conditions to constrain rapid rural disintegration in northern Ghana. Let us examine the first factor, that is,

the issue of peasant autonomy from other classes in the region.

In northern Ghana, rural class differentiation is still in its infancy, not having reached the extent that it has in other African peasantries where it has resulted in the impoverishment and landlessness of certain segments of the community.³² Therefore, there is no class of land owners distinct from those who till the land. As discussed in chapter three and four, attempts to foster the emergence of an agrarian capitalist class in the mid-1970s were constrained by the economic crisis of the early 1980s and the resistance of peasants to their complete subordination to alternative patterns of production. The only discernible distinction among the peasantry is the emerging group of urban middle peasants using improved technology and hiring some labour in agricultural production. However, the prospect that such a group will become an innovating force in agricultural production is circumscribed by the limitations of the labour market in northern Ghana, especially now that efforts to strengthen peasant agriculture and the increasing support for womens' projects are likely to result in greater retention of household labour on peasant farms as opposed to those in search of wage labour.

Thus, in the absence of a strong capitalist class in agriculture, state agencies such as NORRIP and the Ministry of Agriculture remain the only channel for the distribution of technology and credit facilities to rural peasants. Therefore, all potential debts will be owed to the state, and it is unlikely that the government would seek to obtain control of land or expropriate debtors who fail to repay loans fully. Instead, keeping the peasants in a perpetual state of indebtedness that will obligate them to expand their production of commodities for sale might well serve the purpose of integrating them more closely with the market.

But there are risks involved in the expansion of peasant commercial involvement, especially in northern Ghana where environmental limitations could easily destroy the ability of peasants to feed themselves during periods of economic crisis. Therefore, the tendency in most of northern Ghana is towards the cultivation of edible crops which may be sold or converted into household consumption whenever necessary. Consequently, although certain forces (such as the need for cash to purchase other consumer goods or to repay portions of debts to the government) do require a commitment to the commercial sector, increased commercialization in the region is merely reflected in the differing proportions of the produce committed to the market

as opposed to a move away from crops which provide for the household's consumption needs. Thus, to a substantial degree, northern Ghanaian peasants can increase or decrease commodity production as conditions warrant. One of such conditions is the national and international context in which policies are set.

Since the initiation of NORRIP in 1980, two tendencies have emerged which raise serious concerns about the possibility of independent peasant actions and the sustainability of what appeared to be a subsistence-based plan for agrarian transformation in the north. The first is the IMF and World Bank inspired Structural Adjustment Program to which the Ghanaian state's attention and resources have been devoted for the last five years and the second is the virtual surrender of northern Ghana's development to aid donors and foreign experts. Let us first examine the structural adjustment policies and the implications these have for the degree of autonomy of the peasant food producers of northern Ghana.

Structural Adjustment With Growth Versus Peasant Subsistence

While economic imperatives were at the centre of Ghana's reluctant adoption of a comprehensive structural adjustment program in 1984, political pressure from the

ruling social forces in the core of Ghana's export sector and their allies, the dominant capitalist interests outside Ghana, ensured that the policies were directed primarily at reviving the crisis-ridden export sector. Ghana's economic crisis evolved steadily throughout the 1970s and reached its most acute stage in the period from 1980 to 1983 (as can be seen in table 16).

TABLE 16

Selected Trends in the Economy of Ghana (1970-1983)

	1970	1975	1980	1981	1982	1983
Real GDP (1975=100)	100	100	105	101	94	89
Real GDP Per Cap. (1975=100)	114	100	92	87	79	73
Inflation Rate (% p.a.)	9	30	50	117	22	122
Balance of Payments: Current a/c (\$m)	-81	-51	-55	-508	-158	-230
Payments Arrears (\$m)	n.a.	161	n.a.	512	577	440
Merchandise Exports (\$m)	481	728	1104	711	641	439
Merchandise Imports (\$m)	449	651	972	1021	631	539
Cocoa Production ('000 tons)	413	396	258	224	179	159
Export Quantity (1968=100)	129	56	40	41	46	33
Import Quantity (1968=100)	(1971) 86	62	40	45	26	18
Government Revenue and Grants (cm.)		870	3279	4856	5254	10241
Revenue and Grants as % GDP		17	8	7	6	5.5
Government Expenditure (cm.)		1439	7719	9529	8846	14,755
Expenditure as % GDP		27	18	13	10	8
Development Expenditure (cm.)		441	1390	927	817	1354
Development as % Total Expenditures		31	18	10	9	8
Real Development Expend. (1980=100)		--	100	39	29	30
Overall Deficit (cm.)		-842	-4707	-4847	-3966	-4934
Overall Deficit as % GDP		16	11	7	5	3
Minimum Wage (cedis/day)	0.8	2.0	5.3	12.0	12.0	25.0
Minimum Wage (cedis/day) (1977=100)	25	68	178	400	400	725
Real Minimum Wage (1977=100)	183	225	44	46	38	32
Real Average Monthly Earnings (1977=100)	315	285	88	62	n.a.	n.a.

Source: John Loxley, Ghana: Economic Crisis and the Long Road to Recovery. Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988, p. 2.

The economic growth rate which had been stagnant between 1970 and 1980 fell by twenty per cent between 1980 and 1983, with virtually every sector, including the cocoa sector, deteriorating. As the principal export crop accounting for over seventy per cent of total exports in the mid-1970s, the dramatic decline of cocoa production from 413,000 tons in 1970 to 258,000 tons in 1980 and to only 159,000 tons in 1983, resulted in a sixty per cent fall in foreign exchange earnings, a severely negative balance of payments crisis, and an alarming inflation rate between 1980 and 1983.

These serious economic conditions, which were exacerbated by the acute food shortages during the prolonged drought of 1980-1983, prompted the Government of Ghana to embark on one of the most far-reaching structural adjustment programs in Africa. In 1984, with the backing of the World Bank and the IMF, the government instituted the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) which sought to stabilize the crisis-ravaged economy and to promote growth by three characteristic measures: greater fiscal "responsibility", revival of the traditional export sectors in southern Ghana and intensified efforts to mobilize official aid funds and private foreign and domestic investment.

The first of these measures, that of fiscal "responsibility", was pursued with remarkable consistency

and depth. Balanced austerity budgets were introduced that raised taxes on virtually every commodity, cut social spending, froze public sector salaries, increased rates on water by between 150 to 1,150 per cent and instituted 'cost-recovery' fees in social service sectors such as health and education." In addition, the foreign exchange system was liberalized initially through a large devaluation of the Ghanaian cedi in 1983 followed by periodic adjustments, and then in September 1986 by the introduction of a weekly foreign exchange auction. Thus, as shown in Table 17, the Ghanaian cedi has depreciated steadily from its 1982 level of 2.75 to the US dollar, to 171 in 1987, and to 242 in February 1989."

TABLE 17

Changes in Key Policy Variables Under ERP

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Exchange Rate (c/\$)	30.0	50.0	59.9	152.0	171.0
Cocoa Producer Price (cedis per ton)	20,000	30,000	56,600	85,500	140,000
Items Under Price Control	23	17	8	8	

Source: John Loxley, Ghana: Economic Crisis and the Long Road to Recovery. Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988, p. 15.

Corresponding to these fiscal policies have been attempts to stimulate a recovery in cocoa production by increasing cocoa producer prices and simultaneously removing or relaxing price controls on most consumer commodities. Since 1983, nominal producer prices for cocoa have increased sevenfold (as shown in Table 17).

In addition to foreign exchange and price liberalization, the ERP has embarked on a sustained effort to rehabilitate various key sectors of the economy, notably, the transportation, industrial, and mining sectors. To this end, a massive three year Public Investment Program (PIP) totaling over 254 billion Ghanaian cedis was launched in 1986.¹⁵ Seventy-five per cent of the financing for these schemes comes from foreign inputs, and Ghana's foreign borrowing from the IMF, World Bank and other bilateral donors has increased the country's debt from \$1.5 billion in 1983 to \$2.8 billion in 1987.¹⁶ To pay interest and fees on this debt in 1988, Ghana had to spend seventy-six per cent of its export earnings.¹⁷

While a complete and thorough assessment of the ERP is beyond the scope of the present study, suffice it to say that there have been substantial improvements in Ghana's overall growth in production since the program was initiated. As shown in Table 18, the economy has witnessed

remarkable growth each year of the program, by 9.7 per cent the first year and by over five per cent per annum thereafter, with real per capita Gross Domestic Product rising by 6.8 per cent in 1984 and more modestly but still in excess of two per cent per annum since then."

TABLE 18

Selected Indicators of Economic Performance, Real Output
(Ghana 1983 to 1987)

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Real GDP (1975=100)	89	97.6	102.6	108	
Real GDP Per Capita (1975=100)		73	78.0	79.7	81.4
Inflation Rate (% p.a.)	122	40.2	10.4	24.6	42.6 May
Cereal Production (1970=100)	36	112	91	105	
Cassava Production (1970=100)	72	170	129	127	
Cocoyam Production (1970=100)	63	63	53	51	
Cocoa Production (000's m.t.)	159	174	219	230	
Manufactures: Growth Rate Value Added (% p.a.)	-11.2	12.8	22.2	6.8	
Index of Mineral Production (1977=100)	50.2	57.9	65.3	60.3	
Forestry: Logs (000's m3)	560	578	620	890	
Forestry: Timber (000's m3)	189	180	223	232	
Electricity (million kwh)	2,575	1,819	3,020	3,599	
Crude Oil Refinery Throughput (1983=100)	100	155	199	205	
Per Capita Consumption (1982=100)	98.4	110.0	112.6	113.6 Est.	
Investment Rate (% GDP)	4.1	7.6	7.3	10.3	
National Savings Rate (% GDP)	0.3	4.7	3.1	6.6	

Source: John Loxley, Ghana: Economic Crisis and the Long Road to Recovery. Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988, p. 23.

As well, these growth indicators have been reflected in the patterns of consumption of the more affluent sections in the Ghanaian export enclave who constitute the primary beneficiaries of producer price

increases. Import liberalization has resulted in the unprecedented increase in Ghana's imports from \$589 million in 1986 to over \$1.7 billion in 1989.³⁹ As well, real wages of all levels of the civil service rose significantly after the ERP was initiated in 1984.⁴⁰

However, in spite of these visible signs of economic progress in Ghana, the consensus has been that the ERP has been skewed in favour of the export sectors of the economy, and that efforts to achieve food self-sufficiency have been given relatively little attention.⁴¹ Thus the success in reviving the production of export commodities, such as cocoa, gold and timber, has not yet been matched in food production, where, apart from a large post-drought recovery in 1984, the major long-term decline in output per capita has not yet been reversed.⁴²

While the long-term impact of the adjustment policies on peasant food production is quite uncertain, the ERP hinders the viability of food production in two ways. First, the adjustment program has had the effect of turning the terms of trade dramatically against food producers since 1983. This is essentially the result of the exchange rate and price liberalization policies which have raised the price of non-food consumer items faster than the increase in domestic food prices (as can be seen in table 19).

TABLE 19

Relative Prices of Food: Ghana, 1977-1987

Year	Terms of Trade Food/ Non-Food Consumer items	Relative Prices of Food/ Cocoa Production
1977	100	100
1980	96	131
1981	91	92
1982	112	125
1983	138	184
1984	86	136
1985	60	64
1986	57	51
1987	55	42

Source: John Loxley, Ghana: Economic Crisis and the Long Road to Recovery. Ottawa, North-South Institute, 1988, p. 29.

These unfavorable terms of trade have been compounded by the plan to phase out all government subsidies on agricultural inputs to be completed by 1990. The retrenchment of agricultural subsidies has led to sharp increases in the price of all farm inputs. For example, fertilizer prices almost doubled from 1,400 Ghanaian cedis in 1987 to 2,300 cedis in June 1988.⁴³ Consequently, northern Ghanaian peasants have been left at the mercy of market forces for the price of inputs without a corresponding increase in food prices commensurate to that offered to cocoa producers. The expectation is that, as the market mechanism is allowed to operate, differentials in favour of export production will

gradually narrow with food prices being dragged along in response to relative food shortages."

This attempt to resolve Ghana's economic crisis through an economic reorientation towards the international market, emphasizing price rationalization and focusing on the export sector, implies that all that does not correspond to the logic of the international market is left to stagnate. Upon announcing the substantial increases in the prices of agricultural inputs for the 1988 farming season, the Deputy Secretary for Agriculture explained that those prices were necessary "because of the foreign exchange shortage and the fall of international cocoa and gold prices." However, he suggested that development assistance projects such as 'Global 2000' could help mitigate the difficulties imposed on peasants by these high prices." What this has meant for northern Ghana is that the region's development has been virtually turned over to foreign aid donors, with the CIDA-funded NORRIP acting as the development secretariat of the region.

The pre-eminence of international donor agencies and development specialists in northern Ghana in the last five years has produced some notable advantages. Foreign aid funds have increased national government resource commitments to the region through counterpart funding for a

myriad of projects." As well, international donor agencies have partitioned the northern region into several 'Integrated Development Areas' (IDAs) where heavy concentration of investments are being directed to various development projects. The German aid agency, Deutsch Gessellschaft Fur Technische Zusammenarbeit is supporting rural development projects in the West Gonja District, providing technical assistance for a large bullock plough factory and for agricultural extension throughout the region. The Japanese have funded a rural water and health program in the Nanumba District and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has financed agricultural and rural development projects in the Western Dagomba and Gonja East Districts.

For its part, CIDA has proceeded from designing the regional development plan at a cost of approximately \$7 million in 1984 into focusing attention on two IDAs - around the Yendi and the Mamprussi districts - in which \$31 million will be invested over the next five years. One of the reasons for this unusually long delay in the project start-up was the "wait and see" attitude that the international donor community adopted towards Ghana's pledge to embark on the far-reaching structural adjustment program inspired by the IMF and the World Bank in 1984.

Thus, although the initial impetus for a regional development strategy in the north differed from that which motivated the structural adjustment program of the central government, in fact, donor commitments to the north and to NORRIP have become contingent on the success of the Economic Recovery Program. Yet, paradoxically, the measures in the ERP leave the north utterly dependent on foreign donor funding and development initiatives.

Conclusion

In analyzing the process by which state power has recently been dedicated to the (re)integration of the northern Ghanaian peasantry into the regional market, it has been argued that NORRIP and similar projects in the region are a means for the reassertion of state power over a northern Ghanaian peasantry that had reverted to subsistence production and that had increasingly emerged to protest local and regional policies. Although the integrated rural development program is still in its inception, the process has nevertheless initiated a trend towards formalizing and containing peasant subsistence production within a market-oriented economic context by expanding and centralizing

state control of resource allocation through NORRIP. Thus, the reliance on foreign aid has become the only alternative for a region whose peasant productive assets do not correspond to the needs and tendencies of the international market, yet, whose production of food is essential for the survival of the domestic economy and the peasantry. What are the theoretical and practical implications of this dilemma in which the state wants economic growth and the peasants hold steadfastly to their conditions of subsistence production? This question will be answered in our concluding chapter.

Footnotes

1. During this period, the government changed four times. In September 1978, a 'palace coup' ousted General Kutu Acheampong who had been in power since 1972. The new military government of General A.K. Akuffo was also overthrown by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings in June 1979. The elected civilian government of Dr. Hilla Limann which took office in September 1979, was soon removed by another coup d'etat led by Flight Lieutenant Rawlings in December 1981.
2. For details on the dislocative impact of the fall in cocoa prices in Ghana, see Naomi Chazan, An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982 (Colorado: Westview, 1983), especially pp. 156-157; and also pp. 194-200.
3. The Union Government (Unigov) concept became a fiercely contested issue as the government's opponents feared that the concept would legitimize military rule. Although the referendum on Unigov was won by the government, the removal of its key architect, General Acheampong, from office in September 1978 effectively killed the concept.
4. In 1978, the Government of General Akuffo banned all politicians who had been convicted from running for public office in the 1979 general elections. Imoro Egala had been convicted by a committee established after the coup in 1966 to probe members of the deposed CPP government.
5. This realignment of the pro-labour SDF with the PNP may also have been occasioned by the deep-seated opposition that the labour movement had the PFP which was considered conservative and a reincarnation of the Progress Party whose government under Dr. Busia was responsible for abolishing the TUC in 1971.
6. The Group, established before independence, is an informal assembly of prominent northerners and university students collectively committed to bridging the development gap between north and south. For a detailed discussion of the evolution and manifestation of northern regionalism in Ghanaian politics, see Paul Ladouceur, Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana (London: Longman, 1979), pp. 157-243.
7. Among the projects directed to northern Ghana (largely through the influence of the Northern Study Group) were the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Program (1970); the World Bank financed Upper Region Agricultural Development Program (URADEP, 1976); and the CIDA financed Rural Water Supply Program in the Upper Region (1973/74). These were specifically identified by the group.

8. Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Appraisal Mission Report on Integrated Rural Development in Northern Ghana (Annex F), Hull, 1978, p. 4.
9. Rafik Mahama, "The Northern Regional Rural Integrated Program," (Speech presented at the Annual convention of the Northern Students' Union, Tamale, December 24-27, 1987), pp. 2-3.
10. This phase led to the preparation of three reports: (1) The Northern Region, Ghana. Volume I: A Descriptive Overview; (2) The Northern Region, Ghana. Volume II: Regional Development Strategy; and (3), The Northern Region, Ghana. Volume III: Development Programs and Projects (Prepared by, CIDA and the Government of Ghana, NORRIP Technical Unit, January 1983).
11. The outcome of this process was the Proposed Integrated Development Packages IDA 2 and 3: Northern Region, Ghana prepared by the NORRIP Technical Unit in September 1984. These project packages (fifteen in total), were presented to the Canadian International Development Agency for funding which took three years to negotiate. The agreement for a \$31 million NORRIP implementation phase was signed in December 1987 and actual project activity started in June 1988.
12. For a review of orthodox approaches and practices of rural development, see Rosemary Galli, editor, The Political Economy of Rural Development: Peasants, International Capital and the State (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981) and also Gavin Williams, "Rural Development: Partners and Adversaries," Rural Africana, # 25-26 (Spring-Fall 1986), pp. 11-24.
13. CIDA, Volume I: Northern Region Descriptive Overview, op. cit., p. 4.07.
14. For a discussion of the history and performance of animal traction technology in one part of northern region, see Joe Geker, "Evaluation of Yendi Animal Traction Project," (a report to the Yendi Evangelical Presbyterian Church Agricultural Station, Yendi, April 1983). See also Andrew Shepherd, "The Development of Capitalist Rice Farming in Northern Ghana," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979, for an analysis of earlier efforts in bullock farming and support for farm credit schemes in northern Ghana.
15. The Program Manager was co-opted from his position as regional director of the Ghana Water and Sewage Corporation in the adjacent Upper Region where he had previous experience working on CIDA-funded rural water schemes. As

well, the Northern Regional Director of Agriculture became the Deputy Program Manager and sector head for agriculture in NORRIP.

16. Hyden has argued that the problem of 'reaching' or 'capturing' the peasantry underpins the very notion of integrated rural development whereby the peasant is approached not only as a producer but also as a consumer needing 'things' from the market. This way, state policy makers and institutions are left with a wider range of instruments to influence the peasantry. See Hyden (1983), op. cit., pp. 65-69.

17. CIDA, Northern Region, Ghana: Overview, op. cit., p. 2.

18. This connection is drawn repeatedly in all the NORRIP reports especially, Volumes I and II op. cit.

19. CIDA, Northern Region Overview: Volume I, op. cit., p. 4.43.

20. Geker has concluded that the introduction of animal traction in the Yendi area has had some noticeable effects in the increased productivity of maize and millet, two of the main staple crops in the area. See Joe Geker, "Evaluation of the Yendi Animal Traction Project," (a report to the Yendi Evangelical Presbyterian Church Agricultural Station, Yendi, April 1983), pp. 12-28.

21. The District Agricultural Officer for Yendi and the Manager of the Church Agricultural Station in Yendi observed that grants from the German aid project and donations from international church organizations enabled them to offer farm implement subsidies, seeds and fertilizer to farmers who participated in their animal traction training programs. Evidence from interviews in Yendi in June 1984; see also, Geker, op. cit.

22. Regional Overview: Volume I op. cit., p. 4.22.

23. Bernstein has made a distinction between rural economic differentiation derived from the random distribution of the factors of production to different segments of the community, and that based on the exclusive ownership of the means of production by one group who privately appropriate the value produced by others. Henry Bernstein, "Notes on Capital and the Peasantry," in John Harriss, Rural Development: Theories of Peasant Economy and Agrarian Change. London: Hutchinson and Company Publishing, 1982, pp. 160-177.

24. The Daily Graphic, 23rd September 1988, p. 1; and also West Africa, June 27, 1988, p. 1180.
25. Although difficult to quantify, some of the loans granted for farm purposes have been known to end up being used for other private and commercial ventures which benefit only the recipient.
26. Interview results, 1981; 1984.
27. CIDA, Northern Region Overview: Volume I, op. cit., p. 4.44.
28. The CIDA program in the upper region provided two thousand five hundred boreholes fitted with hand pumps to over one thousand villages. Prior to the program, most women walked distances of ten to fifteen miles to fetch water. Therefore, the proximity of the hand pumps has reduced the amount of time and effort needed to obtain water. Figures for time release were computed from household surveys of female water users conducted in the upper region in 1984 by the author. The NORRIP program expects to install three hundred and fifty hand pumps in over two hundred villages in the northern region, and similar programs financed by the Japanese, the Germans and Church Relief Organizations expect to bring the number of hand pumps in northern region to that of the upper region.
29. A similar observation was made by Anna Conti, "Capitalist Organization of Production Through Non-capitalist Relations: Women's Role in a Pilot Resettlement Project - Upper Volta," Review of African Political Economy, May-December 1979, pp. 75-92.
30. Michaela Von Freyhold, Ujama Villages in Tanzania: Analysis of a Social Experiment. London: Heinemann, 1979, pp. 26-27.
31. Shepherd (1979), op. cit., pp. 75-92.
32. For a detailed discussion of economic differentiation and class formation in Kenya, see Christopher Leo, Land and Class in Kenya. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984; and for a similar process in northern Nigeria, see Robert Shenton, The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.
33. John Loxley, Ghana: Economic Crisis and the Long Road to Recovery. Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988, pp. 14-15.
34. West Africa, February 20 - 26, 1989, p. 287.

35. Loxley (1988), op. cit., p. 16.
36. Tony Hodges, "Ghana's Strategy for Adjustment with Growth," Africa Recovery, II, 3 (August 1988), p. 16.
37. Tami Hultman, "Ghana: High Stakes Gamble," Africa News, 31, 2 (January 23, 1989), p. 2.
38. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
39. Computed from figures provided by Loxley, op. cit., p. 25 and p. 45.
40. Ibid., p. 26.
41. Hodges, op. cit., pp. 28-29; and also Reginald Green, "Ghana: Progress, Problematics and Limitations of the Success Story," IDS Bulletin, 19, 1 (January 1988), pp. 9-10.
42. Hodges, op. cit., p. 16.
43. West Africa, June 27, 1988, p. 1180.
44. Loxley has suggested that this vague expectation of a movement toward market equilibrium is ill-defined and uncertain and the social costs of the expectation not being realized are too great. See Loxley, op. cit., p. 28.
45. Loc. cit.
46. The Global 2000 Project is an integrated agricultural development project providing agricultural extension and credit facilities for farmers in Ghana, with emphasis on the north. The project is supported by private agencies in the US and funded in part by USAID.
47. These projects include the Small Landholder Rehabilitation Project (IFAD); Well Drilling (Japan); Technical Assistance in Agriculture and Bullock Plough Implement Factory (Germany); Agricultural Sector Loan (IBRD); Northern Region Community Infrastructure Project (CIDA); and Revolving Credit for Women (CUSO). See CIDA and Government of Ghana, NORRIP II Plan of Operation, op. cit., (Appendix D).

CONCLUSION

In explaining the nature of the food crisis and of agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana, this study has focused largely on the interaction between the primary producers of food - peasants - and the state. It has been shown that the lack of agrarian transformation in northern Ghana is the result of a process whereby the state has concentrated on alternative forms of production without a corresponding development of peasant production. Recently however, the state has intervened by providing peasants with access to better technology, credit and rural amenities. While, in the long run, this more benign state intervention may integrate peasants more closely into the national and international market, the shift in state policies points up the dilemma of a dependent capitalist social formation seeking to transform its productive structures to conform with the international capitalist system, yet instituting a program, such as NORRIP, to resist the more destructive effects of that system. In an attempt to address the contradictions of state policies in relation to the peasantry, this study has been specific to a particular historical, geographical, economic, social and institutional context.

In chronology, four arguments helped to structure the thesis. First, it was argued that the specificity of the traditional peasant social formation of pre-colonial northern Ghana which was characterized by household production mainly for subsistence has been retained, although the intensity of this subsistence orientation has varied from time to time. Second, the colonial and post-colonial state policies which sought to transform agriculture in the north from producing food for household subsistence into producing for a regional and national market have either marginalized or bypassed the northern Ghanaian peasantry. Third, the failure of state-initiated production alternatives in northern Ghana have pushed peasants deeper into a search for subsistence security and a reduction in surplus production whose consequences have been profound food shortages and political unrest throughout the region. Finally, in recent years, state agrarian and rural development policies have been reconciled with the reality of a subsistence-based peasant system of production resisting complete subordination.

Chapter one showed how the dynamics of peasant household relations of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana were inclined towards maintaining subsistence security. The chapter discussed how peasant production was limited to the household, and how the appropriation of

subsistence surpluses on the basis of social status, age and gender was bound by traditional norms and social obligations which required that these surpluses be redistributed to sustain household subsistence. Thus, the limited scope of surplus production and the use to which this surplus was applied precluded the expansion of peasant production and the further development of peasant forces of production in pre-colonial northern Ghana.

Chapter two showed how peasant agriculture was marginalized in the colonial period by the export of labour out of the region into the mines and export crop plantations of southern Ghana. It was demonstrated that, while the colonial state was instrumental in this process, the impetus for such a policy was dictated by the needs and tendencies of capitalist development in southern Ghana's export enclave which required cheap labour. This tendency prevented the colonial state and private capital from investing in northern Ghana's infrastructure and agriculture which could have created the conditions necessary for a capitalist transformation of agriculture. Thus, the insertion of northern Ghana into the international capitalist economy was only partial, limiting the more destructive effects of capitalist penetration in agriculture observed in many African countries.¹ In turn, limited capitalist penetration left open windows of opportunity for the exercise of peasant

autonomy in northern Ghana, especially during periods of economic crisis.

If the marginalization of northern Ghana's peasantry was a colonial design to ensure the flow of cheap labour into the colonial export economy while preserving the system of peasant food production for domestic consumption, what did the post-colonial era provide in terms of the development of peasant productive forces? Chapter three analyzed the role of the post-colonial state in perpetuating agricultural stagnation in the region by focusing on three state policies: the creation of an alternative public sector agriculture, the liberalization of agriculture, and the support for agrarian capitalist farmers in the region. It was argued that in all these efforts, the state attempted to diminish the role of peasant farmers by providing heavy subsidies to state farms and state-induced cooperative farmers from 1957 to 1966; by privatizing state agricultural projects from 1966 to 1972; and by supporting agrarian capitalists from 1972 to 1979. None of the state initiatives succeeded in increasing food production in a sustained manner, nor in transforming the peasant forms of production in northern Ghana. These state initiatives were too costly (relying on imported heavy machinery) and could not be sustained due to the recurrent balance of payments difficulties caused by Ghana's deteriorating international

terms of trade. Furthermore, the peasant farmers who were to constitute the agricultural labour force remained committed to peasant production. However, while the magnitude of state intervention was insignificant in proportion to the prevailing system of peasant production, the selective allocation of resources to the state agricultural sector altered the costs and availability of inputs for peasant producers, diminished their incentives to produce for subsistence and put peasant production under greater risk. Peasants were drawn off to act as wage labourers on capitalist farms in order to cope with their subsistence needs.

By the late-1970s, however, subsidies to the state agricultural sector were reduced as a result of a serious foreign exchange crunch. The failure to sustain these alternative forms of food production led to serious food shortages throughout the country and, consequently to a profound political crisis. Chapter four examined the role of northern Ghanaian peasants in bringing these crises to a head and discussed their response to their increasing subordination to the state production alternatives and to their domination by local traditional leaders. It was argued that the reversion of northern Ghanaian peasants to subsistence production, involving their withdrawal from wage labour on capitalist farms and the conscious reduction in

the amount of surplus food made available for sale, exacerbated urban food shortages, increased urban militancy against the government, and drew more urban residents into agricultural production. Concomitantly, the attempts by traditional nobilities in northern Ghana to increase their social control over direct peasant producers - through land claims and demands for increased tributary payments - led to a series of peasant revolts in defense of subsistence throughout northern Ghana.

It was in this context of profound political and economic crises that the latest state policy focusing on integrated rural development in northern Ghana emerged. Chapter five therefore examined the conjuncture of political and social forces which brought the Northern Regional Rural Integrated Program (NORRIP) and other development projects to the north. Unlike previous state policies which bypassed peasants, NORRIP will combine intermediate farm technology, small credit, rural social amenities and projects oriented to women with the social dynamics of household production - control over land, labour obligations and tribute payment. The purpose of NORRIP is to enhance the productivity of rural peasant farms and to increase their capacity to produce a marketed surplus of food in the long run. It has been argued that by allocating inputs to village elders and traditional leaders selectively, improving peasant farm

technology and increasing peasant indebtedness to the state, NORRIP has a real potential to alter peasant production relations and to increase the dependence of peasants on the market and the state.

This potential of transforming the peasantry through an internal differentiation in their social organization and an outward orientation towards the market has often been presented as antithetical to peasant autonomy and a crucial prerequisite for development. As Williams noted, this view is typified by the argument that

... autonomy must be broken down if peasant production is to be adapted to the requirements of urban, industrial capital formation and state development planning. Peasants must be made dependent on external markets and power-holders for access to the resources which come to be necessary to their way of life, or they must be coerced into organizing production to meet external requirements.

Yet, rural economic differentiation and an increased market involvement by northern Ghanaian peasants have not led to a complete breakdown of the peasant social order nor are they sufficient conditions for the supersession of this social order by a capitalist one.¹ In any case, rural economic differentiation is quite recent and less profound in northern Ghana. Moreover, peasant interactions with the market have entailed exchange relations - reflecting responses to circles of economic prosperity and crisis - and

have not been accompanied by any corresponding changes in production relations.

Therefore, in this context of non-compulsive relations with the market, the maintenance of local autonomy and the possibility of an 'exit option' have been essential for the welfare of northern Ghanaian peasants. This autonomy has implied, among other things, the existence of a viable subsistence system, and it is this subsistence production that has provided the crucial buffer insulating peasants from the inevitable national and international economic cycles of "boom and bust" periods that Ghana has experienced since independence. The question then is: can the autonomy of peasants survive the latest intervention promoting economic differentiation within the peasant village and households of northern Ghana? That is to say, is the transformation of the peasantry possible without destroying its basic subsistence and risk-averse orientation?

In answering this question, the tendency has been to consider only one mode of differentiation, that is,

... the classic process whereby the peasantry becomes internally differentiated with the emergence of rich peasants or kulaks, gradually transforming themselves into capitalist farmers, accompanied by the extrusion at the lower end of landless laborers from the ranks of the poor peasantry.

Thus, recent attempts to situate studies of the peasantry within political economy have suffered from the failure to recognize divergent conditions of reproduction of peasant households even under conditions of extreme adversity.⁵ Therefore, a successful socio-economic analysis of the peasant sector and especially one which precedes the formulation of a strategy for development, must recognize the heterogeneity involved in the process of transformation.

This thesis has introduced two arguments about the transformation of the peasantry and the role of the state in fostering agrarian change in northern Ghana which have significant conceptual implications for the analysis of Africa's rural social formations. First, it has been argued that it is useful to think of the existence of a separate 'peasant social formation' articulated with capitalist or capitalist-oriented modes of production through the instrument of the state. Second, it is the persistence (rather than the dissolution) of this peasant social formation and its resilience at the level of subsistence in the face of an expanded regional economy only partially integrated into the national and international economy which explains the lack of "outward" transformation of peasant agriculture in northern Ghana.

This coexistence of the peasantry and the state has been explained by reference to the 'logic of functional dualism'⁶ in which the state and capital required the persistence of a reserve subsistence economy occasionally providing cheap labour for the industrial/export sectors and, at other periods, providing cheap food for the urban sector.⁷ However, while dominated by this logic of functional dualism, the relationship between the state and peasants in northern Ghana has been highly dynamic; the process of transformation, uneven and contradictory. The transformation which has occurred in northern Ghana has involved two distinct processes. The first, arising from the neglect of northern Ghana's peasants and a persistent encroachment on their conditions of survival, resulted in their marginalization. However, this fell short of destroying them, partly because the alternative forms of production which would have subsumed the peasants were unsustainable⁸ and also because peasants responded by realigning the internal structures within their households and by establishing institutionally stable mechanisms and practices to resist their total breakdown.

A second aspect of this process has been the emergence of an urban peasantry made up of units of production employing some wage labour and using improved farming techniques to generate a marginal surplus over and

above what is required for the reproduction of their relatively smaller families.' Although it was argued that this segment of the peasantry has not been able to convert its surplus into a sustained basis of accumulation, whether or not this stratum will lose its peasant status by systematically engaging non-family labour on a substantial scale will depend, in part, on the pace at which NORRIP introduces changes in the pattern of peasant production and on the sustainability of massive resource transfers to the rural peasant sector. Let us examine the effect that changes in the pattern of peasant production may have on the fortunes of the urban peasantry.¹⁰

As suggested in chapter four, the viability of the urban farming enterprises depend, in large measure, on the availability of a stable labour market. To the extent that NORRIP succeeds in expanding peasant production through the provision of credit, technology and amenities in the rural sector, the likelihood that such a labour market would emerge diminishes. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on womens' projects could result in the retention of the female labour force on household farms and small income-generating activities as opposed to those in search of wage labour.

As well, subsidies for most capital-intensive inputs - equipment and chemical fertilizers - on which urban

peasants rely to sustain their farming activities, have been removed as part of the structural adjustment program of the central government. However, NORRIP and similar projects targeted at the rural peasant sector continue to provide animal traction technology and credit at modest terms to the rural peasants. Thus, the cost of production of the urban peasants can be expected to rise above that of the rural peasant sector, which, using mostly unpaid family labour, is already low.

However, NORRIP's inherent advantages for the rural peasant sector are not without costs. The selective allocation of productive inputs to male elders and village leaders has begun a process of rural economic differentiation which has the potential of undermining the reciprocity in the circulation of labour and subsistence goods associated with the traditional peasant society. As well, increasing commercialization in the rural economy could result from the continuing needs of peasants to repay debts owed to the state through the sale of their foodstuffs to the market. While these changes could occur in the long run, the extent to which they may transform household relations of production radically is circumscribed by several mitigating factors, among them the fact that crops cultivated in the countryside remain largely edible products

which can be diverted to household consumption in times of economic crisis.

Thus, in relation to the famous debate on the future of African peasantries between the defenders of their permanence and the advocates of their transformation into wage workers, the northern Ghanaian case is one in which both parties are partially right and wrong. Northern Ghanaian peasants remain highly subsistence-oriented but not with unchanged social relations. Similarly, more peasants are being drawn into commodity and commercial relations (with the intervention of NORRIP and the emergence of an urban peasant sector), but without full loss of access to productive land, still abundant in northern Ghana. Furthermore, the political and economic climate in Ghana remains supportive of the current integrated rural development strategy as both the Government of Ghana and CIDA have pledged a fifteen to twenty year commitment to NORRIP."

By oscillating between discussions of the matrix of power within which peasant production has been structured in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods, and the agrarian policies of successive post-colonial regimes, this study has presented the historical case of a region only marginally incorporated into the national and

international system of capitalist production.

Consequently, the diverse interventions of the state in agricultural production have reflected the imperatives of dominant capitalist interests in the south while continuing to foster the articulation of the peasant mode of production in the north with other modes of production in the country. This point was amply demonstrated by the rise of secondary tendencies within the Ghanaian state whose motivation in establishing NORRIP was related not only to the occupants of formal state offices, but also to the economic and political demands of peasant producers in the northern Ghanaian countryside.

Thus this study did not simply explain the origins and implications of agrarian stagnation in northern Ghana; it also examined the limitations of previous attempts at agrarian transformation, analyzed the conditions under which peasant autonomy was exercised and discussed the most promising mechanism by which the transformation of peasant society might be achieved without unbearable costs to the peasantry. It has been shown that bypassing the direct producers of food by promoting agricultural production alternatives which are unsustainable for Ghana in the context of a highly volatile international environment can only lead to further agrarian recession. Second, insofar as the conditions that sustain the viability of peasant

subsistence production prevail (that is, with unlimited access to land, free non-competitive family labour and a reversible relationship with the market), the peasantry will overcome attempts to subject them to such alternative forms of production. Short of brutal repression, then, it is unlikely that a thorough transformation of the peasantry by a capitalist-oriented economy in a manner that precludes their ability to withdraw is a feasible alternative for northern Ghana. Finally, a policy that recognizes the heterogeneity of changes in the peasant sector and seeks to enhance the productive capacity of peasants by relying on their inherent economic advantages may increase their marketable surplus in the long run and partially integrate them with the market without destroying their ability to feed themselves.

Footnotes

1. Robert Shenton and Louise Lennihan, "Capital and Class: Peasant Differentiation in Northern Nigeria," Journal of Peasant Studies, 9, 1 (October 1981), pp. 47-70; and also Robert Shenton, The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. See also Dirk Kohnet, "The Transformation of Rural Labour Systems in Colonial and Post-Colonial Northern Nigeria," Journal of Peasant Studies, 13, 4 (July 1986), pp. 258-271.
2. Quoted from Gavin Williams, "Taking the Part of Peasants: Rural Development in Nigeria and Tanzania," in Peter Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds., The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications Ltd., 1985, p. 170.
3. A similar observation was made in relation to peasants in Tanzania by Gavin Williams, "Taking the Part of Peasants," in John Harriss, Rural Development: Theories of Peasant Economy and Agrarian Change. London: Hutchinson and Company Publishers, 1982, pp. 381-398.
4. Philip Raikes, "The State and the Peasantry in Tanzania," in Harriss, op. cit., p. 351.
5. Harriet Friedmann, "Household Production and the National Economy: Concepts for the Analysis of Agrarian Formations," Journal of Peasant Studies, 7, 2 (January 1980), p. 161.
6. De Janvry uses this concept to denote the complementary coexistence of a peasant forms of production providing cheap food, labour and household-financed social welfare in a social formation overwhelmingly dominated by capitalist relations of production in key sectors of the economy. See Alain de Janvry, "Peasants, Capitalism and the State in Latin America," in Shanin, op. cit., pp. 391-404.
7. Wolpe's analysis of the South African situation exemplifies this logic of functional dualism, where labour-power is reproduced cheaply in the Bantustans and the border states for the mines and agricultural estates. See Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," Economy and Society, 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425-456.
8. The issue of sustainability is central in explaining the more profound process of transformation of the peasantry in northern Nigeria. A combination of oil wealth and a political system dominated by the north enabled the state to allocate substantial resources in support of agricultural modernization in that country. Therefore, the thorough and

sustained penetration of capital in agriculture diminished peasant withdrawal options in the north of that country.

9. For a detailed analysis of the contrast between rural and urban peasants, see Alexander Schejtman, "The Peasant Economy: Internal Logic, Articulation, and Persistence," in Charles K. Wilber (ed.), The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment, 3rd. edition. New York: Random House, 1984, pp. 274-298.

10. The incidence of urban family farms in Africa is fairly recent. It originated during the crisis of the 1970s when urban residents in Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and many African countries were compelled by acute food shortages to resort to farming as a means of subsistence. Therefore, their future is difficult to forecast at this stage. For an analysis of the future prospects of this stratum of the peasantry, see Luis Llambi, "Small Modern Farmers: Neither Peasants nor Fully-Fledged Capitalists? A Theoretical and Historical Discussion," The Journal of Peasant Studies, 15, 3 (April 1988), pp. 350-372.

11. CIDA and the Government of Ghana, NORRIP II: Plan of Operation. Hull, Quebec: Canadian International Development Agency, 1987, p. 8.

METHODOLOGY

Generally, data on Ghana and especially on northern Ghana have been incoherent and sparse. Since independence, most statistics on Ghana have not been organized to reflect regional trends. Moreover, between 1970 and 1984 (representing the census dates), only rudimentary information was available on the performance of the Ghanaian economy. Most of the research and data collection tended to focus more on the export sectors thereby making information on northern Ghana difficult to find. Therefore, this study relied on a combination of methods and sources of data. The two primary sources of data were archival and direct field research. Chapter one and two relied heavily on the wealth of colonial archival material and government documents located in Tamale (the regional capital of northern region); in the Native Authority capitals of two district centres in which the research was conducted (Eastern and Western Dagomba districts); and in the National Archives of Ghana in Accra.

The process of reconstructing social formations during the pre-colonial and colonial periods through the use of archival records is not without its difficulties as most of the authors of the extensive field reports, diaries, native administration reports, and private papers could neither understand nor speak the local languages. The archival sources have therefore been supplemented by personal interviews on oral tradition, and other secondary sources on the economic history of the area.

The bulk of chapter three and four relied on interviews with government officials, village chiefs and elders, peasant farmers as well as farmers based in urban centres during five months of research in the northern region. Information was gathered between May and September 1984 by means of thirty village meetings throughout northern Ghana; a survey questionnaire administered to a sample of two hundred peasants. Of these, one hundred and forty (comprising one hundred males and forty females) were resident in

remote northern Ghanaian villages, especially in the cluster of villages around the farming district of Yendi. Sixty farmers resident in the main regional capital of Tamale and suburbs were also interviewed in order to compare the circumstances of urban as opposed to rural peasants (Appendix 1 is a sample of the survey questionnaire). Several farmers who were prominent during the 'rice boom' of the early 1970s were also interviewed informally.

The information on the two peasant revolts discussed in chapter four was derived from personal involvement in relief efforts in the area in 1981, and subsequently, through interviews in the conflict areas in 1984. Finally, the analysis on NORRIP relied on published reports and sectoral studies by the Government of Ghana and CIDA, interviews with Ghanaian and Canadian project personnel, and my continuing role as consultant to the program.

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUBSISTENCE
FARMERS IN NORTHERN GHANA

Questionnaire I.D. and Category

I.D. _____

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Rural (Village) Farmer, village name: _____

☐ Urban (Town) Farmer, name of town: _____

PERSONAL DATA

1. Name of respondent: _____

2. Age: Young _____

Middle Age _____

Old _____

3. Years in school (if applicable): _____

4. Size of family: _____

5. How many depend on you directly: _____

6. Who bears the primary responsibility of providing for family?

☐ Self directly

☐ Indirectly through family elders

☐ Independent household heads

☐ Other, specify: _____

7. When did you start farming?:

☐ since childhood

☐ recently, number of years: _____

8. Has farming been your continuous full time occupation?

☐ yes

☐ no ... state other occupation(s): _____

9. What is the size of your farm?: _____
If respondent cannot tell, ask ...
10. How many farms do you have?: _____. (Approx. size): _____
11. Why is farming your main occupation or one of your occupations? Select in order of importance...
- [] to feed my family
[] to make extra money
[] special reasons, explain: _____
12. What type of crops do you grow?:
- [] food crops: _____
[] cash crops: _____
[] both
[] other: _____
13. Any livestock?
- [] yes: _____
[] no
14. What was your yield last year?
- _____: _____
_____: _____
_____: _____
15. Has your yield increased or decreased in the last ten years?
- [] increased: What do you think were the main reasons responsible for this.
List in order of priority:

- [] decreased: What do you think were the main reasons responsible for this.
List in order of priority:

16. Tell me something about the technique you use in farming:

17. What tools do you use in cultivating you farm?:

- ```
[] hand implements: hoe, cutlass, sticks.
[] animal drawn implements: bullock plough
[] tractor, combine harvester
[] other:
```

18. Do you own any of the following?:

- [ ] bullocks for ploughing: how many?: \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] tractor; how many?: \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] combine harvester
- [ ] other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you use fertilizer and other pesticides?

- [ ] yes: Are they readily available? \_\_\_\_\_  
Can you afford them? \_\_\_\_\_  
[ ] no: why not? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Have you had any assistance from government in the last ten years?

- [ ] yes: state types in order of significance
- [ ] credit
- [ ] improved seeds
- [ ] fertilizer
- [ ] bullock plough training
- [ ] bullock plough implements
- [ ] tractor services
- [ ] agric. extension, specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] no: Did you ever apply? \_\_\_\_\_



21. Have you ever applied for a farm loan or credit?

☐ yes ... how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ no ... why not?: \_\_\_\_\_

25. Who works on your farm(s)?:

☐ self only

☐ self with immediate family members

☐ self with kin and neighbors

☐ hired labour

☐ other ... specify: \_\_\_\_\_

26. Do you pay these people?

☐ yes ...in kind: \_\_\_\_\_

in cash: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ no ... why not?: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Have you worked on other people's farms in the last ten years?

☐ no .... why not?: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ yes ... type of farm: \_\_\_\_\_

when did you start?: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the three main reasons why you started working on other farms?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

do you still work there? \_\_\_\_\_

If no ... why?: \_\_\_\_\_

28. What proportion of your produce do you consume?:

- ☐ all of it
- ☐ half
- ☐ less than half
- ☐ more than half
- ☐ none at all

29. What proportion of your produce do you sell?:

- ☐ all of it
- ☐ half
- ☐ less than half
- ☐ more than half
- ☐ none at all

30. For the last ten years, do you sell more or less produce?

- ☐ more ... give reasons:
  - ☐ better yield
  - ☐ better prices
  - ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ less ... give reasons:
  - ☐ poorer yield
  - ☐ poor prices
  - ☐ lack of consumer goods
  - ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

31. If respondent still sells, what are the frequently used marketing channels?:

- ☐ self directly
- ☐ middle-men
- ☐ marketing boards: rice, grains board, food distribution

☐ other...specify \_\_\_\_\_

32. Are you aware of the Northern Region Rural Integrated Program (NORRIP)?

- ☐ no
  - ☐ yes...what does it do? \_\_\_\_\_
-

33. Were you ever contacted about NORRIP?

[ ] no

[ ] yes ... for what: \_\_\_\_\_

34. Can you identify any other government and international projects that provide assistance to farmers in your area?:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

35. In your opinion, what are the three most important things that will improve your production?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

36. If your production improves, will you sell more or less of your produce?:

[ ] more

[ ] less ... why?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\* Thank you for your patience \*

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**END**

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