

UNITED NATIONS
AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
DAKAR

CS/2544-14

S 5034
(16)

NUMERISE-AGS-RM

SEMINAR ON
THE EMERGENCE OF AGRARIAN CAPITALISM IN
AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA
Dakar, 3 - 12 December, 1973.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LAND TENURE SYSTEM
LAND APPROPRIATION AND FORMATION OF THE
RULING CLASS IN THE MAWRI COUNTRY (NIGER)

by

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NOVEMBER, 1973.

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Located 300 kilometres east of Niamey, the capital of Niger, the Mawri country is part of the Hausa world, of which, together with the whole of the Djema group located in the present district of Dogondoutchi, it forms the western junction limit. Its main feature is the fairly large fossil valley, the Mawri Pallol.

The Mawri consist of "two preponderant groups (which) are on the one hand, the Gubawa among whom can be found the oldest occupants of the territory; they are the founders of the Lugu village, the home of SAVAUNIYA, the major spiritual power of the Dallol, and on the other hand, the AREWA, the descendants of a marriage contracted between a Bornu warrior and a young Bugube girl.^{1/} The latter gradually took power in the Dallol and gave it, its political structures.^{2/}

The Gubawa formed small itinerant groups under the protection of the senior priest. There was no political hierarchy but a social order based on religious rites, in which the priest was only the mediator between man and nature. The economy of these groups was based on hunting and extensive cultivation. "These groups of hunters found in the open spaces of the north large areas which had to be extensively cultivated, and in which hunting in the fairly vast bush could be combined with millet cultivation in fertile areas, using light and easily transportable implements."^{3/}

The AREWA, whose "political organization was grafted onto an older one which they never attempted to destroy, but to integrate"^{4/}

^{1/} Bagube: singular form of Gubawa

^{2/} Marc Henri Piault - Histoire Mawri Ed. CMRS. 1970 p.48.

^{3/} Op. cit. p.40

^{4/} Op. cit. p.44

founded a capital town: Matamkari whose sovereign dominated the vassal chiefdoms spread all over the region.

But this attempt at political centralization could not lead to the creation of a real State, because the major chiefdom, falling a prey to internal rivalries and wars, could neither concentrate, nor consolidate its power through a real exploitation of the farmers or through the creation of a powerful coercive machinery. Furthermore, "the original opposition between the Gubawa hunters and their Arewa conquerors, reflected in the institutions by a division of responsibilities, (the former were the "priests of the land" and the latter, political leaders), led to a permanent instability in the constitution of a State".^{5/} The vassal chiefdoms were autonomous to a fairly large extent in the management of their affairs, and the economic organization remained the same. But the introduction of a political order, however, loose, could only accentuate social differentiations or bring them to light. It was always possible for sovereigns and particularly for their entourage to take, according to their needs, goods and cattle from the farmers, to inflict labour dues (Gaya, which will be dealt with later on) and to impose fines. This type of exploitation was carried out sporadically, as it was not indispensable for the survival of the aristocracy which owned slaves captured during the various wars and a large number of dependents working on the land in the cropping season. It is true that the Sarkia Arewa^{6/} had decreed that all the land belonged to them, but this was a symbolic right which mainly involved the mystic and religious responsibility of the political power, and particularly, the connection between the sovereign and the prosperity of the harvest and the general welfare. It is obvious that a theory such as this opened the way to deviations leading to the abuse of power. It is only when colonization began that there was a real appropriation of land.

^{5/} Op. cit. p.46.

^{6/} Sarkin Arewa; Souverain dy Pays Mawri.

The Transformation of the Land Tenure System.Before Colonization.

The customary rules govern the relation between man and land which, included in a political system, is determined by the way the space is occupied, cultivation methods and the destination of the crops produced, and above all by the religion.

To the extensive type of cultivation corresponds a collective farming: lineage segments of 30 to 40 people work together, under the aegis of a family head, on the same farm known in Hausa as Gandu. The Gandu is therefore this family land, beside which we find small plots known as gamana, cultivated by the young men one or two days a week, according to the authorization of the head of the family.

These young men are entitled to their harvests, while the produce of the Gandu is distributed among the community by the head of the family, the "maigida". The gandu is not a collective property but rather a collective obligation to work. Besides the movements necessitated by the extensive forms of agriculture, internal migrations have also resulted from political struggles and quarrels. The space was peopled according to the principle of extensibility: every new village was founded by a lineage segment who left their original village, either because it was overpopulated and no longer met the needs of the community as a whole, or because a family breaking away from its people decided to leave, or because a dethroned chief moved with his followers to found a new chiefdom elsewhere. Marc Henri Piault underlines the political aspect of the migrations by relating them to the frail nature of the Arewa system based on the division of political and religious tasks between the Arewa and the Gubawa: "this very instability transforms the relation and leads to attempts by both parties to "recover" the aspect of power which eludes them.

Consequently, migration in search of hunting grounds or of new arable lands are closely connected with a political struggle.^{7/}

To these necessary movements corresponds the farmers' right of uses: as soon as a group stop working a farm, another group may settle on it unless it is a case of land lying fallow. Although those leaving land vacant may place it at the disposal of others, the first people to clear the land retain a preeminent right to it: it is the land of the forefathers whose cult is based on the Mawri beliefs centred around the alliance between man and nature. Thus in the whole Mawri country, the Sarauniya who represents the first woman settling in the region is symbolically the true "lord of the land" (*maitre de la terre*) on whom the fertility of nature still depends. In this general context, gifts and loans were customary transactions, but there was no selling.

Land can never be owned, in the Mawri tradition, but the produce of the land is appropriated for consumption. The land itself is only an element enabling people to ensure their subsistence; the right of user and the preeminent right of the lineages who held the land coincided almost constantly only with respect to the land in the immediate vicinity of the village. The relative abundance of land made it possible to maintain this system in which the product of labour was mainly intended for consumption and in which accumulation, limited to precautionary needs, could not entail a decisive economic discrimination.

Intrinsically, land has no value, only labour has value and, consequently, the men who work. This is the very basis of the pre-colonial land tenure system. Farmers rotate and the right of first occupant is first and foremost a symbolic and social right.

^{7/} Op. cit. p.46.

From colonization to our days

The ways and customs were transcribed by the administration during the colonial era so as to lay down a sort of code of civil law appropriate to each region of the country. But the colonizers who had a europeo-centric view of law distorted the prevailing customary facts, thus preparing the legal way to structural transformations of the society.

With private property, a necessary ingredient for capitalism, which began to assert itself, and with the settlement of people in a territorial framework necessary for a successful administration, the concept of the right of user gradually took an exclusive meaning in customary law although a clear mention was made of value of labour. Thus according to the Hausa customary land of Zinder: "both collective property and private individual property exist" (p.18) "the immovable properties which can be privately appropriate are farms, fruit trees, houses and wells" (p.20). In the customary law of the "Birmi N'Konni fetishist group" the text is vacillating: "in general property in collective". Married men and particularly the fathers of several children have individual properties. There is however no clear distinction between these two forms of property" (p.5). There is a constant fluctuation in the texts. Mention is made of the right of user when dealing with ownership. From this confusion through which can be seen the rigid mental attitude of colonial government officials, concept of property, which is really absent from customary land applying to land, acquires a real status even if reservations are formulated with respect to its application. The person who first cleared the land becomes an owner: "thus the land belongs to the first occupant, that is the person who clears the land and makes it produce. But that person who thus acquires a right of ownership of a plot of land has no right to sell it."^{8/}

^{8/} Mawri customary law.

The concept of ownership is introduced into the system, but is still masked by the initial customs. The land belongs to the person cultivating it, but it ceases to be his as soon as he stops cultivation. Ownership is not yet understood as a definitive right, it depends on labour. "If a plot of land remains uncultivated, it can be given by the village headman to someone else with the understanding that the latter must make it produce.^{2/} It should be noted that although customary law was the basis on which the colonizers settled land problems, laws were nevertheless passed, around 1924, some of which involved land registration, a land tenure system still partly in force today. This problem needs to be studied so as to throw light on the colonial conception of the land tenure system with respect to West Africa as a whole, but unfortunately I do not have enough information on this subject.

A law issued from the colonial legislation was promulgated on 19 July 1961. Marked by the proposals of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (R.D.A.); this law looked democratic; originating from customary jurisdiction, it repeated the traditional terminology, even though, since it fell within the context of capitalist relations production, it legitimized property. It is based on two major principles: the title goes to the person cultivating the land (recalling the customary law) and the land belongs definitively to someone who cultivated it for 10 consecutive years.

This law completes and generalizes the process which was outlined throughout colonial jurisdiction with respect to customary law.

It was expressed in the following way with respect to the Mawri region. Labour bestows the right to acquire a property, but it is also its condition sine qua non: with no cultivation, appropriation ceases. In the law of 1961, labour enables property to be acquired

^{2/} Op. cit.

according to an irreversible process, since after ten years of cultivation, the right of ownership is definitely acquired and is no longer subject to an obligation to work.

The reference to the "traditional" relations of man and land: "the land is the property of him who cultivates it" which the government make of national identity, no longer has any basis since this principle only has meaning if it corresponds to a mobility of the group and to a continuous rotation of farmers. The use the law makes of this principle so as to appear democratic - property to those deserving it - only serves to conceal the facilities it gives to those having the ability to cultivate the land today, that is those who have money and those who can live labour. It thereby reduces the farmers with limited means to remaining at all costs on the plot, which becomes poorer and poorer and can be inherited and therefore increasingly divided, and compels them, in order to pay their taxes, to migrate seasonally and to work as farm labourers. Their ability to ensure the yield of their own plots and, a portion to extend their farms is obviously lessened as a result of this.

The area cultivated before the colonial era corresponded to the quantity of millet or sorghum necessary to provide food for the community, and this varied with the production capacity, that is with the number of people constituting the lineage segment. Today the social disparity is crystallizing by an irreversible process of which the law consolidates and accelerates the cycles. Those with large production capacities are the definitive owners of tomorrow, who will proletarianize the small farmers of today.

A text¹⁰ of 1970, confirms and elaborates the law of 1961 on four points:

^{10/} The contents of this text have been supplied to me by the sub-prefecture of Dogondoutchi. It had been written and signed by eminent personalities of the government and the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain. But I do not know its specific status from the legal point of view.

1) A farm cultivated for ten years gives the right to inalienable ownership.

This is only a confirmation of the law.

2) A plot cultivated for less than ten years: the original proprietor may have it back after a year.

- Particulars are given about the ten year period preceding the acquisition of the title. According to the traditional rules, the person who cleared the land or his descendants may always resume ownership of a plot of land, but so long as it is worked by someone else, they cannot deprive him of its use. It is the abundance of land available which would enable this rule to operate. According to this text, not only is the one who cleared the land called its owner, he is in addition an owner who must exercise his ownership in time, otherwise he loses everything and no longer has this pre-eminent right reorganized by tradition. He learns to exercise ownership although he is an owner conditioned by his labour. It is interesting to note here that the so-called customary chiefs judge in favour of the one cultivating the land, but as soon as the judgement goes up to the administrative level, it is the owner who is in the right.

3) A land uncultivated for less than ten years may be rented (5% of the harvest) by some one who wants to put it under cultivation.

- Now if the land is not cultivated in this period, the law introduces a renting system which never existed and which is still not practised today. When the farmers, for whom it is difficult to ascribe value to land, were interviewed on this, they replied: "Why give a present to someone who lends, since he does not give any present". If the renting of land is still

not widespread, gifts are becoming more and more rare and lending has been transformed: you lend with time limits.

4) A farm left uncultivated for 10 years reverts to the State which allocates it to some one prepared to cultivate it, but may take it back when the farmer stops cultivation.

The State again makes its position clear with respect to the land tenure system: this seems to be the confirmation of a text dating from 1962¹¹ in which the State apparently decreed that all the lands of the valley as well as the irrigated lands belonged to it. These lands could be distributed with the proviso that the State could take them back for reasons of public interest.

This text of 1970 confirms ownership and legalizes its consequences, dispossession, renting, apportioning. If we add: the possibility of recovering one's property in quite a short time and of renting it out, this ten year period becomes a sort of waiting room of the ownership, after which it is final.

11. Information supplied by the Dogoudouctchi sub-prefecture.

What is the use of the law? - Farmers' mystification- Rationalization and weapon of the
propertied classes.

The study we have just made of the evolution of land legislation shows that the legal texts and the written classification of customs are not only the expression of changing reality but also an instrument in the very process of change. Even before the society undergoes really great changes, the colonial legislation transcribes social relations in such a way that the concepts of property, inheritance, possession.... are already used in settling litigations involving farms. Through the judgements delivered we can glimpse the person who will always be right, the proprietor who makes the land profitable. Caught between a system, cannot explain and their own rules which have not been abolished but evaded, the farmers are always in conflict with one another. They try to integrate into their claims the new concepts of property, inheritance, possession, but they insert them into their own system in which these distorted and distorting terms and by constituting a right based on ancestral property. A large number of these litigations centre on the notion of remote inheritance: an ancestor cultivated a plot, someone else settled on it 20 or 30 years ago, and the descendants of the first farmer are claiming back their farms. This is how a farmer explained to me the alterations of their claims. "For a long time we allowed people to settle on the plots cleared by our ancestors, and then land became scarce so we claimed them back." As a source of increasing disorders, land became the object of the laws of 1961 which were already mentioned but which did not help in solving the conflicts; nor did the text of 1971 iron them out. Either these laws are ignored or the farmers are confronted with them at the sub-prefecture when their disputes are brought there. There, their claims,

which are regressive in their forms, since they are the expression of a defense against the upheavals brought about by the whites, are firmly rejected in the name of democracy and development, the so-called steam rollers of the "feudal" structures. These farmers, disconcerted by a logic which is not theirs, may perhaps end by also integrating these new laws into their system of representation, but there will be something else, another code in the face of which then will again be left in uncertainty.

In order for the ruling class to be constituted, it must constantly be "revolutionized"¹² and sow a disorder conducive to its formation, in which people lose their bearings except those whose enterprises cause them to ensure, more or less consciously at the individual level, but objectively at the overall level, the phases necessary for the constitution of the new economic and political power inserted into the capitalist system. This disorder and this "revolutionization" mean both the absence of a real code and the emergence of new codes as the social conflicts proceed. Infact, we have tried so far to detect the thread which underlies the changes in the legislation, but we have not yet stressed the extent to which this evolution takes place in disparity, complexity and apparent confusion. The transformation of a code has not led to the suppression of the previous one or prevented different arbitrations being awarded according to the places and the interests involved. Several land tenure systems are in force in Niger at the same time. According to their distance from urban centres, or according to the land situation in which they are involved or their standard of education, village or district heads will pass judgement based on their own customs, or on their customs altered by the whites, or on the new laws, whether distorted or not.

12. Bettelheim: Calcul économique et forme de propriété.
Ed. Maspero.

In some regions, the land is still subject to a registration system dating from the first period of the colonial era. The "prefectures" do not seem to be equally familiar with the text of 1970. This apparent disorder in the legal situation is a choice weapon for the potential bourgeoisie, which can thereby constitute the economic basis necessary for its power through appropriation and speculation without being hindered or limited. This class once consolidated in power will no doubt finally codify the result of its venture, but in the meantime, the law must be allowed to play its role of exercising pressure. Its amendments as the needs of the dominant group are felt gradually objectifying the new dynamics of social relations, while its disorder deprives farmers of their traditional organization and compels them to defend themselves with weapons which turn against them, in so far as these weapons were made by others in relation to a reality which was no longer theirs. However, although as we have already seen, the law may have a relatively autonomous action on reality, its origin is nonetheless the social relations which shape it.

Landed property and break-up of the "traditional" agricultural organization.

The relations of production change their nature with colonization. A process of positive appropriation of the land whose origin is to be traced in the monetization of the economy emerges and quickly develops towards the end of the colonial era (Niger, for a long time a military territory, did not undergo any major economic transformations during this period). The emergence of a market economy transformed both men's relations with the land and men's relations with each other.

Men and land: until colonization, the absence of an intrinsic value attached to the land itself and as a counterpart, the overriding importance of self-subsistence, led to a great mobility of

specific holdings. The Labour-Product cycle was closed and land was merely the basis necessary for the repetition of this cycle. From the point of view of this dynamics of the Labour-Product cycle was closed and land was merely the basis necessary for the repetition of this cycle. From the point of view of this dynamics of the Labour-Product cycle and in order to ward off breaks in it, nature was considered as the specific domain of the gods and the worships of these gods only reflected the contract between men and the gods who placed their domain at the disposal of men, provided that sacrifices were made to them. This contract and alliance between men and gods meant that nature could not be appropriated by man. The headmen may have taken the lands nearest the villages but the main constraint on power was not exercised on the land but on goods ¹³. It is clear that within this system "expropriation" has no meaning.

But, with the gradual monetization of the economy, land acquires an intrinsic value, owing to the very fact that it produces exchange values; the food crops produced can be sold on the market and cash crops must be sold in order to pay taxes. A crop not only ensures subsistence, it becomes a "potential" means of acquiring other goods available on the market; it is also a "potential" source of accumulation. Land produces money, and, like every exchange value in a commercial system, it can only be the object of private ownership. Thus value is expressed concretely by a price and by buyers. This commodity, land, plays a new role in its relationship with society. Land is no longer at the disposal of the social interplay of the group, but its present appropriation by individuals, integrates the group, through its members, into the complex mechanisms of a system which it cannot control and which constrains it.

13. This problem will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Land, as a commodity defines human relations - the farmer whose link with the land used to be mobile now has a fixed relationship with the land which conditions him. As we shall see later, the fragmentation of land or its non-fertility or disappearance drive the farmers to proletarianization. On the other hand, the individuals participating in the dynamics of appropriation maintain a mobile link with the land, but a mobility which is no longer meaningful inside the Mawri group. This mobility is in fact oriented by an external system in which these individuals are placed in the national context, itself subjected to the world capitalist system. In fact, they buy land, and may have it cultivated for them, in various regions of the country and take part in the land speculation which emerges in the large urban areas.

Islam which has been spreading very fast for about 30 years, to the detriment of animism, helps to legitimize this movement. This religion, officially recognized today, justifies the ownership of goods, social differentiation and the legitimacy of wealth. If symbolically, the land belongs to god; it can all the same be transferred by men who consider it as an economic resource. Women and farms, that is, the means of economic production and social reproduction, are at the entire disposal of man in the koranic law spread by the priests (marabouts) in the villages.

It is when the land is devalued in the Mawri system of representation whose former cults of alliance with nature are subject to the devaluating pressure of the moslem ideology which dominates the society as a whole, that it acquires considerable importance but of a different order. Instrument of division and social stratification, the land, formerly, an element of alliance, has become an element of alienation.

- Men's relations with each other - As a necessary collorary to the private appropriation of land, the collectivist relations of production, in the form of the gandu tend to disappear in favour of small units of production grouping mononuclear families. That is how the farmers themselves interpret this transformation.

The "peace", a period of forced calm after 1950, is invoked as a factor of individual mobility. Formerly, the wars of the 19th century made solidary peregrinations difficult, and later, forced labour necessitated collective defense structures in so far as settlers took one child per family. "With the peace everyone settled on his own "the people say. Beyond this type of generality, the maxim of the old is different from that of the young. For the old generation, "we are living in a troubled period in which the young have become lazy; our sons are no longer prepared to work, they only think of buying useless things and therefore the crops produced are inadequate to feed the large community for which we are responsible". The gandus are thus divided into individual plots for which the sons are compelled to take responsibility. For the succeeding generations, the authority of the old is no longer acceptable; the young men are no longer satisfied with a granary filled with millet and they want their independence. At the same time, the poll tax compels them to look for individual resources, for as soon as they have children, they are provided with a "head of family" card compelling them to pay taxes. Under-lying all that are references to taxes, wage labour, the markets and the needs they create.

Within the collective production structures, the labour and the life of individuals are subject to the authority of the head of the family because he provides wives and food. Only the resources acquired outside the groups enable the young men to achieve their autonomy. Agricultural wage labour, seasonal migrations or the possibility to sell part of their products are all elements which

break up the patriarchal cohesion of the extended families. The will of the young to become heads of family and to manage their plots in terms of their needs is therefore a result of this necessity to find paid jobs enabling them to pay taxes. They are infact the only people to fulfill the conditions of wage earning, which strengthens their claim for a greater autonomy, justified by their jobs and the additional labour they imply. Besides this, market economy, gives a quantifiable value to labour power, now an element of the process of individualization. The so-called "community" spirit disappears leaving each producer to make use of his labour power his own way. One of them said: "each one must pay his own tax, so everyone tries to pay his taxes as quickly as possible and no longer looks after his relatives". The shortage of plots is also a factor in the break-up of the family: out of three families interviewed the sons of one family had left the area for good.

With respect to the profitability of production, per person, farmers differ in their opinions: some think the "gandu" is the most efficient form of production, others think that a small production unit produces a larger per capita quantity of millet for the whole year. At the root of this diversity of opinion, are no doubt variables of a natural, economic, and personal nature. At any rate, individual landownership together with the growth of population have led to the scarcity of land and to the fixing of property in an inversible process. Plots are no longer available in the region since independence, and since they can now be inherited, they are being divided, and this was expressed to me in the following way: "Twenty years ago, the bush was like a young girl, all the boys could pay her a visit, it is now like a woman, once married, she must be guarded and no one can approach her." Furthermore, the shrinking of the agrarian units makes the situation of the small farmers very delicate: when a member of the family cultivating the land falls sick, the season is jeopardized to a very great extent.

However, two important reservations must be made with respect to the fragmentation process.

1) the reduction in the size of production units noticeable to a very great extent in the market towns and in the large villages does not yet greatly affect the hamlets and the isolated villages mostly peopled by families farming the land collectively. But this is merely a somewhat slower transition; the third and even the second generation within the gandu will divide the land into individual plots "thus what is being done" one of them told me.

2) This movement concerns essentially families with limited means. On the contrary, the rich and powerful notables still keep a large number of people around them. In addition to their brothers and cousins who stay with them after the father's death, they have the means to cater for many wives and as many as 30 children. Their wealth attracts all the distant relatives looking for wives, who come and work on their farms for 3 or 4 years and are provided with a dowry at the end of the period. On the other hand, some chiefs who were unable to operate the transition between power over men and appropriation of land, those prevented by the respect for tradition or internal quarrels from constituting for themselves a real personal domain, distinct from their statutory incomes, and likely to ensure them considerable financial resources, have witnessed the disintegration of their traditional entourage in strict proportion to the extent to which they lost their former powers without these being revived by integration in the new economic and monetary order. More than power or authority, money has become the cement of large communities. Using the ideological persistence of the former "gandu" model new family enterprises are constituted, but these are essentially geared to making profits.

Without dwelling on this, we shall simply give here the following case as an example. The father of a senior civil servant died recently leaving eleven children: five adults and six children. The civil servant and his elder brother separated from the three other adult brothers who did not have the same mother. The elder brother was managing the property while the civil servant was looking after the six young brothers who were all attending schools. Having a well remunerated job, the civil servant paid the dowry for the two wives of his brother, as well as the dowry for the wives of several cousins who had temporarily joined the family farm. He himself has four wives and 29 children, most of whom are at school; he pays wages to a large number of people cultivating his lands. Thus we have here an enterprise in which the elder brother is subordinate to the younger brother, the civil servant, instead of being the head of the family as he would be in the traditional agricultural context. The younger brother ensures the financial management and thereby, acquires the social influence of a true senior member of the family and determines the real network of de facto dependencies which his personal situation enables him to extend beyond the village. The family farm thus becomes a multi-purpose enterprise and the head of the family is now a business man, an "entrepreneur".

The formation of a ruling class.

We have so far been describing the historical and general mechanisms through which landed property was established, as well as the contradictions which developed with the former society. This process was accompanied by a specific social differentiation whose effects we have already glimpsed and which we must now study.

There is no constituted élite today, but social groups whose roots and means of access to power differ, although their interests converge objectively. They are essentially the chiefs, the traders the civil servants, the ex-service men and party leaders.

The chiefs: they have to make the transition from a power based on force to one based on the accumulation of wealth. Before the colonial era, the legitimacy of a chief's power depended on his ability to wage wars and to ensure the balance between the opposing force in the society. He was answerable for internal social order, thereby identifying himself with the prosperity of the group. The sovereign, his family and those around him lived on the income derived from the work of the slaves captured during the wars, the sporadic labour dues known as the gaya, imposed on farmers and the fines imposed by his vassals when offences were committed. Besides this, a large amount of manpower was provided by a vast number of relatives constituted, not only by his numerous wives and their children but also by all close and distant kin, descended from the royal lineage who are the "sons of the women", that is, the descendants of women of the royal lineage as well as the younger brothers of the sovereign and their own family. He could be paid more or less regular tributes by groups owing allegiance to him or recognizing his pre-eminence, as well as fees by Fulani shepherds on whose behalf he established grazing contracts with the Mawri farmers. We may also mention, although this was never very important in the Mawri country, the dues paid by the traders crossing the country, whose caravans could thus be relatively insured against plundering. On the other hand, his sovereignty which was legitimized by the general prosperity with which his personal fate was bound up, depended on his ability to re-allocate the goods he controlled. His granaries were opened in periods of famine, the children of the poor could be entrusted to him and he had to provide refuge and assistance to women on their own. In the face of the ever-present competition of the princes claiming the throne, the sovereign had to make sure of the support of his people by giving generously. The sovereign's power was measured by the number of people to whom he distributed wealth, and he was thus practically prevented from accumulating personal

wealth. The wealth of a sovereign, of a chief, was in fact, only his distributive ability and when the chieftaincy changed lineage, the princes removed from power became as poor as the farmers. But these small states, marked by a more or less advanced centralization of power and by the existence of relations of domination, served as a framework for enterprises of colonial and then of national integration which turned these sovereigns into heads of canton.

With the new domination of a productive mode determined by the market economy the legitimacy of power was now based on property, wealth and "technical know how". The objective chances of a candidate to the chieftaincy no longer consist of his strength but his insertion into the civil service or the possession of goods and money. Those of the chiefs who tried to maintain their power did so by entering into the new social relationships while maintaining and sometimes accentuating the "feudal" political structures of the chiefdoms. When land began to be inherited and the chieftaincy was maintained by the colonial administration in a single lineage, the princes of that lineage thereby acquired the exploitation monopoly of the sovereign lands which were thus de facto the subject of rivalry. The sovereign lands, which were in theory abolished upon independence, became in fact part of the private legacy of the royal lineage. The gaya¹⁴, formerly required by the chiefs in return for their social obligations, is today equivalent to more or less casual labour for the benefit of the wealthy princes or heads of canton. Besides the perpetuation of these "traditional" advantages, colonization provided the chiefs with other sources of wealth: the commission in cash on the taxes they collected as well as the possibility

14. Gaya: system of mutual aid on the farms in which the beneficiary of the gaya must provide food to those cultivating his land during the work day. But the wage-earning labour took precedence over the free aid, except for the chiefs for whom the gaya maintained its form of virtual forced labour (corvée). No one is legally compelled to do it, but no one escapes it, ideologically.

of making profitable use of their position of middleman between the colonial administration and the population. They were also the first to have the opportunity of sending their children to school¹⁵. Today those maintaining their hegemony in the new social framework have a capital which they fructify (we shall see how later) at the same time as, they themselves or their family become connected with the political or administrative organisation of the State. The chief of the Takassaba canton is a minister. The chief of the Dogoudoutchi canton has brothers who are: "questor" (treasurer) in the national assembly, sub-prefect, adviser to the government, former mayor of Niamey, President of the "RDA" youth. The head of the Tiberi canton is a deputy. Some slight qualifications must however be made here. If the head of a canton can strengthen his position by the support given him by the members of his family working in the spheres of political power and administration, he is sometimes subjected to the particular strategies of each member of the family group and to the rivalries which may propel it. The power of the family no doubt spreads but is likely to be unevenly distributed. Formerly, rivalries could only be settled within the groups; today the rivals may be supported by an external power, and the disparity of these powers restricts that of the head of the canton, if he does not accumulate all of them. At Takessaba, the personal power of the head of the canton depends on his accumulated functions. At Dogondoutchi, the family of the head of the canton is considered as one of the most important families in Niger; but he himself is restricted in his ambitions and is watched fairly closely by his brothers.

The role of the chiefs, especially the village chiefs, who fail to constitute a real economic power, is reduced to that of subordinate government agents whose main job is collect taxes. Their money income certainly gives them a privilege compared with the average farmer, but does not, for all that, place them in the

15. Even though in a first phase, there was a good deal of reticence with respect to school attendance, to such an extent that sometimes the sons of slaves were sent to school instead of chiefs' sons, in the last analysis it was the latter who were the first to have and still have privileged access to school education.

dominant groups, although they may join it if they are able to invest and accumulate. Conversely, competition between potential members of the dominant class may evict one of its elements from the race.

The traders: Traditionally, the Hausas are traders, but the important traders in the Arewa were mainly foreigners; it is only recently, that is towards the sixties, that the Mawri followed. The problem is less that of an economic insertion into the new production relations than that of increasing their capital by investing in agriculture, and of its political protection. The social rise of two Dogougoutchi traders illustrates this phenomenon.

The first trader is an ex-serviceman. After the second world war, he went home and took to farming. Finding "this work too tedious", he bought a camel with his army pension and traded in kolanuts and cotton from Sokoto (Nigeria) to Dallol Mawri. But he had to travel round all the markets of the surrounding villages, and this was very "tiresome". He sold his camel and bought a sewing machine and began to make "boubous" (long moslem robe) which he sold at 1500 CFA francs each, the cost of the material being 750 CFA francs. After saving 80,000 francs, he went to Ouagadougou to buy cotton fruits (pagnes) and cakes of soap, which he sold Dallol. Arrested at a customs station, he went back to Nigeria to buy spare parts of sewing machines and sweets. Meanwhile he managed to have a shop built, and this gave him the status of an important trader. Today, he still gets his supplies from Nigeria and Niamey but employs peddlars. Besides his shop, he has bought plots of land, and holds some plots as security, all these being added to those he inherited from his family. His farms are cultivated by paid workers.

The second trader worked with a peddler for 7 years, that is how he "learned the rules of the game". He was selling kolanuts and cigarettes. Then, he left for Niamey so as to diversify his goods. He thus moved to a higher stage: "after carrying goods on my head. I moved to the stalls"¹⁶. With the money earned, he bought a shop - "a stall keeper may be much richer than a shopkeeper. But the owner of a stall has to move his stall morning and evening, while the shopkeeper simply closes his shop when leaving, this is less tedious. People think that a shopkeeper is rich. Those living in the bush go about repeating this in the villages, thus making one known. A rich man becomes an important personality, he attracts people. When the party takes a decision, we are called upon, the party does not choose, its people at random". This trader is today an urban Dawaki¹⁷ of the head of the Dogondoutchi village, who is himself a cabinet minister. He also takes an active part in the activities of the Dogondoutchi youth together with the president of the "RDA" youth. His farms are cultivated by paid workers.

On the whole, it is the traders who buy the most land and who employ the largest number of wage earners. They do not give various loans, but loans in kind. They claim two bundles of millet after the harvest for every bundle of millet lent during the hungry season.¹⁸ They also practise consumer credit. Besides this, their economic position enables them to carry out vast speculations; they buy bags of millet for 2,500 CFA francs after the harvest and sell them for twice or three times as much during the hungry season.

16. Tablier: a petty trader selling cigarettes, sweets and matches on small tables, (stalls) in the street corner.

17. Urban Dawaki: a title given by the chief, in principle to a prince "sons of the women" who formerly had to assist him during wars.

18. Hungry season: period preceding the harvests, during which the stocks kept in reserve for the year become scarce.

They also practise consumer credit. Besides this, their economic position enables them to carry out vast speculations; they buy bags of millet for 2,500 CFA francs after the harvest and sell them for twice or three times as much during the hungry season. They figure prominently in important transactions, thereby giving an excellent support to the RDA which they financed, once the victory of the party over the Sawaba opposition party was ensured the traders gradually become integrated into the institutions of the towns and villages either through the "RDA" or the administrations, or Islam. My impression is that they also become integrated with the chieftaincies when the chief involved has a place in the administration or in the political organisation of the country; this confirms the comment of an informant: "A trader always mistrusts a chief, for if they are friends, the chief will always ask for a loan, they agree much more with the civil servants".

The civil servants:- whether they have posts in Niamey or in the local administration¹⁹, or exercise functions of authority on the spot (chief, deputy), they have estates which they cultivate with the help of their brothers, or of more distant relatives. Their money income enables them to speculate in foodstuffs, to buy plots of land and to employ paid labour. They are always among the people most capable of developing their plots, "they are enlightened" as people put it, and know how to invest and to forecast. When it is a case of indirect management (this applying to civil servants working outside their home area) the civil servant sends money to his family, who generally uses it to pay the manpower employed; sometimes the civil servant receives foodstuffs in exchange, and on completion of his service, he has acquired considerable properties. Very often the products of the former feudal society, as we have seen, the civil servants attempt to resume their place in the so called traditional political system.

19. At Dogondoutchi: most of the public services employ Mawri civil servants who have desiring to stay in their region.

It is especially at that time that, cumulating two forms of power, they acquire the means of real domination. The civil service is necessary but insufficient to lay the foundations of a class power, which in Africa requires the supremacy of the agrarian social structures, a supremacy achieved through the constitution of vast profitable estates. "In the absence of a commercial bourgeoisie, the role of the latter is played by the civil service" a civil servant told me.

Civil servants and traders ultimately adopt the same tactics, the aim of both is to monopolize the means of agricultural production, with the exception of those civil servants who under the cross-fire of consumption and credit, spend their time paying debts.

The ex-servicemen: Their social and even political rise can be explained in the same terms as that of the previous group. They are infact "ersatz civil servants", they know a little French and have travelled, which confers on them the reputation of an "enlightened head" and their pension is guaranteed until the end of their days. They often engage in trading or else confine themselves to the profitable cultivation of their plots. They support the government which gives them much help. But some of them found it very difficult to readjust themselves to the conditions obtaining in the country and, as vagrants or alcoholics, their instability sometimes puts them on the fringe of society. Moreover, the habits acquired during their military service, and the need to assert their difference from the farmers, often induce them to consume the imported goods: drink, tinned food, clothes bought from traders on credit. These commodities, already very expensive, are sold to them at double their market price. Thus, when going to collect his quarterly pension, at the "Administration de la sous-prefecture", the ex-serviceman is always accompanied by traders who take almost

all of it. Under these conditions, the ex-servicemen who are the auxiliaries of the government which calls on them as leaders of the social mobilization of the people, and as the recognized defenders of the nation, do not always have the means to accede to a decisive economic position. Nevertheless they remain bound up with the government, the administration and the traders, on which they depend and to which they serve as a back-up force.

The Militants of the "RDA": Mention must be made of them as a group, because after independence the militants of long standing especially the senior members of the party, received "gifts" ranging from the grant of trading facilities (bars, shops) or plots of land to posts in the administration of the prefecture. These rewards, added to that position in the party machinery, give these men a social, political and economic status which is particularly strong because the RDA has been the single party in the constitution since 1964 or 1965. Mention must also be made of the great "marabouts" (priests) and the moslem religious elite who participates in this movement of social advancement by constituting estates and by appropriating the means of production.

The emergence in the ranks of the power élite of traders, ex-servicemen, "RDA" militants, the political consolidation of the civil servants and the insection of the traditional authorities into the new social, hierarchy are achieved through the constitution of landed estates and through processes of economic accumulation, the necessary counterpart of which is the proletarianization and the "pauperization" of the farmers. These are the underlying laws of the system and of course they do not exclude in any way, within the governing class being formed, group antagonisms, regional oppositions, or intestine struggles which reflect the vulnerability of the social structures upset by political and economic transformations which depend more and more on the outside world. The objective convergence of the group interests concerned underlies the apparent diversity and of individual destinies appear to be fragile as were the fortunes of speculators in 19th century Europe, it is because the keenness of competition and the rapidity necessary for appropriation and new accumulation mark by an apparent

disorder the consolidation and the overall installation of a propertied class. Conversely to a lesser extent, farmers are not all equally impoverished, there is still room for some individual advancement, thereby accentuating the destruction of a society whose ideology of group adherence and solidarity persists without there being any means for it to operate.

Accumulation and Pauperization.

Each of the groups constituting the ruling class has its own way of accumulating and increasing capital, but a common process of accumulation, connected with land appropriation, comes to light when making the synthesis and the dynamic analysis of the means and modes used.

Money and power makes it possible to acquire a free labour force through the "gaya", or a paid one when earners are involved and maintained through the family. We have here the first common denominator which ensures at the base the stability of a class coming into power.

The Gaya engages whole villages on a chief's farms: a very profitable work is done in a day's time, not only because, emulation among the workers induces them to accelerate the tempo, but also on account of the time chosen by the one requesting it. The Gaya takes place at the most appropriate time of the cropping season. The work thus extorted, only costs the value of the food consumed, and even if an ox or cow must be slaughtered when there is an important Gaya (this is seldom the case now), this munificence in a society in which meat is always a luxury shows the social prestige of recipient of the gaya, while its reality is attested by the number of participants in it, some chiefs complain of the persistence of the gaya, because, they say: "the work is carelessly done, which is not the case for wage earners"; but they still make use of the gaya, and

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the new authorities such as the deputy or the sector chiefs who are not entitled traditionally to the Gaya make people till their farms for them according to this system.

The employment of wage earners during the whole of the cropping season each year is the essential mark of belonging to the bourgeoisie.²¹ Wages vary with the years and the market conditions: if there is a high demand, particularly after the rainy season, the privileged land-owners increase by 50 CFA francs, the daily wages which range from 100 to 200 CFA francs, thus attaching the labour force to themselves.

The extended family - wealthy heads of household, as we have already seen, maintain a family cohesion, thanks to the large number of wives they have and to their ability to provide their brothers and distant cousins with food and wives.

The head of a family certainly benefits from the family labour force the output of which he controls, but his dependents benefit from the "fall-outs" of power and wealth. The additional employment of wage earners places the direct children in a hierarchic situation either within the relations they entertain on the farms, or because, thus freed from farm labour, they can attend school. Other dependents (brothers, cousins, nephews....) figure at the top of the social order instituted by the group, and even if they only stay there temporarily, they benefit from the prestige gifts and marriages offered them, as

(20) Sector heads: a few years after independence the canton chiefs of the Mawri country, subdivided their region. Each of the parts of the canton (3 or 4 parts according to the canton) is controlled by a relative of the chief who helps the latter in his legal judgements and in tax collection.

(21) There are "those who always employ" and "those who never employ" but owing to the transitional situation of the society, for a large number of farmers, the number of wage earners employed varies during the cropping seasons and is irregular from one year to another: occasionally they may become wage earners themselves. For some, it is a question of difficulties inherent to the success of agriculture, for others it is a question of a gradual impoverishment.

rewards at the end of their stay, which unite them with the class from which they sprang objectively. The exploitation of all the junior brothers is not permanent, they may, one day become a head of family with dependents.

Among these three forms of exploitation of labour power, the one concerning the family differs practically in kind from the previous two, the gaya and the wage-labour.

The Gaya is a form of sporadic exploitation confirmed by "tradition" but the nature of its consequences has today changed. As we have already seen the product is never redistributed but accumulated, and the work done by a participant, even in a day, probably does not prevent his own activity but reduces it: each day is precious during the three months of the cropping season, and the quicker the farm is hoed after sowing, the more abundant the harvest will be.

The agricultural wage labour is, no doubt, the purest and the most exacerbated form of exploitation, since the wage earners are caught in a vicious circle which takes them gradually to proletarianization - "collective work is now disappearing, workers are employed at 200 CFA francs a day, there is no longer any free aid. Formerly it was sufficient to feed those who came to help you, today, only the rich can be helped. "The change came 10 years ago", said a Dogondoutchi farmer. Another said: "an increasing number of wage earners are being taken on now, since everybody wants money now: formerly people only left their farms and worked on the farms of others only if they wanted to give a helping hand".

As we have seen, the factor which underlies class antagonism is the monetization of the economy. For the privileged, the money is there, in the form of wages, trading profits or a pension; for others find the money has to be found, firstly so as to pay taxes and secondly so as to make purchases on the market ranging from basic commodities (sugar,

salt, condiments, oil) to superfluous products. And millet has to be bought during the hungry season when the stocks are used up. Moreover, marriages are now very expensive, considering the present social competition facing people. Apart from the money, question, land parcelling compels people to join the wage earning groups: "More and more wage earners are being taken, since people are getting richer and more and more people do not have any land to cultivate", a farmer explained. People migrate during the dry season in order to find money for tax paying, while the other factors (millet shortage, land parcelling.....) rather explain agricultural wage earning. We will only briefly mention seasonal migrations, the study of which goes far from beyond the scope of land problems. With the exception of school-children, migration involves or may involve men between 18 and 60 years of age. For that reason, those who sell their labour power on the work sites of the towns of Niger and particularly in the coastal towns of Niger and particularly in the coastal towns are mostly young men. It is they who go to the docks in Abidjan, to the coffee, cocoa and rubber plantations in Ivory Coast and Ghana, who frequent the Bouaké and Kumasi markets, fetch water in Sokoto and Lagos, crowd the roads with innumerable petty crafts and trading and dream in the strangeness of the southern forests of miraculous fortunes. But migrations is limited in time, since people must go back to their country for the cropping season: consequently the most easily accessible jobs are the least profitable and, employed as farm labourers with very harsh contracts, they return to the villages with hardly enough money to pay taxes and a few blankets quickly distributed to relatives. When the family is relatively well off, the children go to school, or if they are not admitted, they may also migrate. But in that case, they are not bound to return during the cropping season, because their parents may employ wage earners. They then spend a longer time away from home their chances of profiting from it are brighter.

The farm labourers may be women who are employed to work the farms of rich women pound millet; children over seven years of age who recruited mainly on Thursdays, the weekly day of rest, (their daily wage is about 75 CFA francs), "young men" from 11 to 70 years who are paid more (from 100 to 200 CFA francs) and finally "adults" (over 70 years of age) who are only paid 100 francs. There is a tendency for wage earners in the north of the Dallol to work either in their own village or in neighbouring villages, while in the south, a large number of workers are recruited in the north of Nigeria.²² The regional variations in rainfall entail internal migrations in the Dallol: farmers look for a job while waiting for the beginning of the cropping season in their own region, or because they have finished before it begins raining elsewhere. It also happens that, in a family, people employ their brothers or cousins particularly in the hamlets.

The employer when he cultivates, and the wage earners do the same work in the fields except for the old people who are used for cutting shrubs. A large number of farmers work irregularly during the cropping season so as to have time for the cultivation of their own plots; this employment also varies from one year to another. An employer today may be a wage earner tomorrow, but the real process of wage earning is such that, wage earners increasingly need to sell their labour power, even if, for a year or two, a good harvest or profitable migrations enable them temporarily to escape their fate this sequence was perfectly explained to me several times: "the wage earner loses all his strength on somebody else's farm ...

22. It seems that foreign manpower is less well remunerated than national manpower. I was told several stories including the following, and the chief and his entourage went to look for people in Nigeria, the people agreed on a certain amount of money, but after completing their work, the labourers were refused that sum of money and were told. "After all you were brought here in trucks and that is already an advantage. This matter was once taken to the Sarkia Kebbi (the one heading the Argunfu emirate in northern Nigeria). On the other hand, the Mawri do not work in Nigeria where the daily wage is slightly lower.

In addition to this, he does not cultivate his own farm at the right time, he therefore produces less and must look for a job the next time. Another: "I have been a wage-earner for three successive years: I had been a wage earner before, but it did not take all my time as it does now".

At the other end, wealth and the appropriation of land are determined by the exploitation of this manpower, which makes possible the development of ever-larger areas, the product of which enables large landowners to employ more hands. The constitution of these large estates takes various forms. We have already seen this in connexion with each of the leading groups, but we must make a synthesis here.

As we have already seen: "the land belongs to the one who cultivates it". In the light of this principle, loans and grants²³ are practised by farmers whose lands are not all cultivated owing to the shortage of labour. For that reason, they are compelled to yield to the requests for their land, which sometimes takes the form of pressure. The heads of family harassed by taxes or debt are thus compelled to put their land into "gaya" or to sell it; traders often benefit from this situation by buying the land cheaply especially if the land is estimated in relation with what these traders obtain from it. Unequal distributions and illegal expropriation are means essentially used by the very powerful feudal heads in the regions. I was told about the case of unexpropriation involving about twenty farmers including two (brothers of the chief of the village), who had bought their plots. Plots were allocated after independence, particularly in a canton, after devising a system of compulsory fallow. Around each village, a territory was demarcated and divided into two parts: the first part served as a grazing land for the Fulani shepherds, thus manuring it at the same time; the second part was cultivated by the farmers of the village.

23. Loans and grants are not only practised according to hierarchy but also in a family or clan, but on very small areas and in fairly limited proportions.

This arrangement was reversed after five years the Fulani took the place of the farmers who in turn cultivated the former Fulani grazing ground which were in principle allocated equitably and under the control of the deputies and the head of the canton. I gathered from the farmers that the "notables" not only took the largest areas leaving the rest to others, but also the most fertile lands. Moreover, once distributed, these plots were to be acquired permanently but it seems that new problems arise every five years and that some farmers do not get back the whole of their farms. Only those owning vehicles which they can use to transport manpower may clear free lands. In fact, these plots became scarce and were more and more remote from villages and water supply point so that it was impossible to settle in them or to go home on foot after the day's work. From what has just been said two basic tendencies emerge, orientating some people towards wealth and others towards poverty, and which irretrievably split the society into two. The poorer the farmer, (parcelling, accident, debts....) the more dispossessed he will be, and he will sell his labour power. And the more land a "notable" appropriates,²⁴ the better he is able to employ farm workers who will enable him to acquire new plots of land.

Once the men and the plots of land are acquired, one link is still necessary to complete the cumulative capitalist cycle and to understand the impoverishment of the peasantry: developing the land and making the product (peculiar and agricultural) profitable. To make a small plot of land yield a profit, it must be intensively cultivated, but the application of intensive methods of cultivation also leads to social discrimination.

24. The area of land possessed is not, from the outset, a sign of wealth. A poor peasant whose father had few brothers and sons, may inherit fairly large farms which, he will probably not be able to cultivate completely.

Fertilizing the soil is a costly enterprise; chemical fertilizers which are still not widespread are very costly per hectare. Fulani shepherds will only agree to put their beasts on a farm after the cropping season, so as to provide it with manure, in return for money. The system of traditional fallow which has changed over time, is tending to disappear except among large estate owners. A farmer explained that his grandfather cultivated farms which he abandoned for other farms elsewhere, that his father had cleared large areas, so that his children could inherit them, on which he practised fallow periods of 4 to 5 years, and that although he himself cultivated all his inheritance, it was hardly enough to feed his family. The Resulting differences in yield²⁵ are important, particularly with respect to groundnuts, an important source of indebtedness for farmers in the past three years.²⁶ Only those with fertile land stood the effects of the drought without running into debt.

Horticulture is also profitable. To do this, one needs to have plots near ponds or to dig artesian wells. It is only possible for a few privileged people to construct private cement wells.

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25. I have not been in this region in the cropping season and it is difficult to interview people on the notion of the millet yield per hectare, but the classical answer was: "the rich farmers easily produce 1000 bundles a year. The chief farmer is that farmer who produces 1000 bundles in a season.
26. The "UNCC" (the national credit and cooperative union) lends seeds to farmers who must return them with interest at the end of the cropping season: three bags are returned for a loan of two. The chronic indebtedness of the last few years made the "UNCC" adopt a much stricter policy which demands cash repayment from farmers this year. When a farmer pays what he owes, the "UNCC" lends him a larger quantity of seeds for the following season.

The allocation of the wet plots is controlled by the government when it has developed the ponds; if not they are coveted by traders who are buying many of them at the present time. This agricultural diversification is all the more worthwhile as it is a source of income in the dry season, sugar cane cultivation seems to be making progress. However small gardens are generally poorly developed as opposed to the large ones: in the north, a few tomatoes or lettuces are mostly consumed, while in the south, mangoes are practically the only resource, but the poor or the average farmer cannot cart them to the towns.

The ability or the inability to develop lands leads to ownership or proletarianization, just as the ability to capitalize on the benefits acquired (whatever their nature) by the use of the market, enables some people to grow rich "on the backs of others", particularly those who felt the effect of monetization as a constraining factor. As regards the former, money is the propeller of accumulation, they invest in cattle, transport, trade, horticulture etc... all sorts of assets enabling them eventually to borrow in order to widen their economic scope. For the others "money disappears" either in taxes²⁷ or in clothes, or in often superfluous consumer goods (plastic jewelery, tinned food, imported cloth...). In all that, groundnuts, have been a factor of social differentiation: "some people grew rich when groundnut cultivation was being extended, those who were formerly rich. They cultivated large groundnut farms, a large quantity of seeds were loaned to them because they had the resources. But for us millet cultivation is better, because millet is not sold whereas money obtained for groundnuts disappears immediately without one knowing how²⁸. To borrow without having a solid background is very difficult, according to the classical adage "the rich only lend to the rich". The poor economic situation of the small farmers never enables them, to amass the necessary funds for the purchase of an animal or for the

27. The tax takes 25 to 50% of the small and average budgets.

28. These are the words of a farming, "maitre de hameau."

cultivation of a garden. The elites also make use of the market for speculation in foodstuffs, millet in particular. It must be mentioned here that completely different meaning can be attributed to millet selling. Some sell millet during the hungry season, either because they bought it for three times less after the harvest, or because they had it in stocks, in addition to the quantity necessary to provide food for their family - a surplus which might be sent to the towns after or during the harvests, the prices obtaining there being higher. Others sell millet (generally in small quantities and in the village markets) because some "business"²⁹ compelled them to do so, although know their stocks are limited and that the hungry season will be difficulty. For the latter group, the millet is basically intended for consumption and, if there is a shortage of this commodity, they will be compelled to work during the cropping season; while for the others the millet is a source of huge profits.

The monetization of economic power through groundnuts cultivation, horticulture, speculation and investments of all sorts enables a small group of people buy labour, thanks to which a number of their children freed from agricultural labour, may go to school. This group ensures its own reproduction, on the one hand, by ensuring the cultivation of its plot by those sons remaining in the village and since these are few, the parcelling of the inheritance is avoided; and on the other hand, by investing in the means of access to the civil service, a privileged way to power. But the impoverished farmers only reproduce their own "pauperization" by unemployment (in the case of too large families compared with land fragmentation), by wage-earning or by the necessity of keeping all their children on the farms, thereby, cutting them off from all access to "knowledge".

29. This "business" includes marriages which are often contracted after the cropping season, and taxes.

The school, a privileged reproduction instrument of a class society, on the other hand, does not exist in many villages (5 schools for a canton, that is for 30 to 40 villages), on the other hand, it is very selective at the beginning or in the course of the studies. The "drop outs" of the school system raise a serious problem, since, declared unable to write, these children no longer succeed in re-inserting themselves into the agricultural society, good farmers, in fact, begin at an early age.

Finally, through the exploitation of labour power, the appropriation of lands and the development of a landed estate and its profits, a ruling class is formed which plunged part of the farmers, the medium and small ones, into uncertainty with respect to their fate which no longer depends on themselves³⁰, driving them to short or medium term bankruptcy, and finally proletarianizing the dispossessed immediately.

30. The following advice was given me by a farmer "to recognize the difference between a rich man and a poor, man we must ask: "Do you have difficult years? if he does business even when there is a famine, he is then a rich man."

Conclusion

The difference in kind between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial relations of production can be noticed through the gradual dissolution of relations based on a personal tieless gift-giving based on the market economy. The "liberation" of the labour force this engendered and of channelled into a new system of constraint, led to the beginning of a private appropriation of land. The movement falls within the ambit of the law in which the codification of land relations based on ownership facilitated the task of the social groups whose rise to power is henceforth conditioned by the constitution of an economic power. A distinction must no doubt be made between the incomes derived directly from the land and those derived from trade and speculation.

Agriculture is not yet in fact a capitalist sector. The nature of the investments and the means used still belong to the former mode of production, that is why only the social groups with money incomes from elsewhere make a profit from agriculture, whose profitability still depends on the volume of labour available from production and on speculations in the product at the level of circulation.

There is a differentiation at the farmers' level but it is a fragile one. Families living only on agriculture are faced with great variations of income, according to the amount of rainfall, the dwelling place³¹ and the number of children to be married in the year, the profits derived from migrations, health accidents.... while civil servants traders or chiefs always have the means to consolidate and widen their power on a capitalist basis, while maintaining the so called "traditional" structures. In fact, this agrarian society seems to be at the present time at an intermediate point between feudalism and "capitalism!"

31. The degree of isolation is a factor of differentiation, but also, in a same market town, those with plots along the major roads make some profit because, at harvest time, farmers store their millet with them, thus enabling traders to come and buy it. The master of the house collects 5 CFA francs for each of the bags kept with him.

On one side, we have the future bourgeoisie, which continues to fulfill the former functions in which the exhibition of wealth, the maintenance of a court, a network of personal dependents persist as indispensable elements of power. On the other side, despite the ever growing wage earning classes, the resistance of the small land owners is still very strong and it is this juxtaposition of small production units which capitalism controls but without taking charge of them: the final product must be extorted through the market and through taxation without destroying the former structures. The farmer is the only one responsible for the reproduction of his labour power, and in so far as the product of labour is thus cheap, the extortion of surplus value is much higher than if agriculture were based on capitalist relations of production.

This type of labour appropriation leads to inequalities between the town and the rural area, between the regions and between the farmers, and while eliminating the poor farmers, makes possible cheap investment in agriculture and the maintenance of social investments at the lowest level and finally, associates the farmers arbitrarily with the State through such institutions as "UNCC" the "House of Agriculture"³² the "Office des Produits Vivriers du Niger" (Niger Food Board).³³

From the ideological point of view, the complementarity and the fusion of chiefs, notables, and Islam on the one hand and those of administrative agents and schools on the other, give the State both its "traditional" or "national" guarantee and its modernist guarantee. It is within the party that all these elements are found and the system legitimized. But an ideological answer is still to be found for corruption, taxes, despotism and arbitrary action.

32. The "House of Agriculture" has been buying beans for one or two years.

33. "Office des Produits Vivriers du Niger" buys and sells foodstuffs.

