

UNITED NATIONS  
AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

DAKAR

CS/2544-2

S 5094  
11



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

AGRARIAN CAPITALISM IN EAST CAMEROON

by

Michel ONGOLO

September 1973



-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

AGRARIAN CAPITALISM IN EAST CAMEROONINTRODUCTION

The province of East Cameroon, located more than 650 km. from the coast, was late in being penetrated by European influence and hence by capitalism. At present the forms of agrarian capitalism found there are still embryonic. However, there is a beginning of a vigorous development of capitalist enterprises with the veritable invasion of this region by lumber companies from Ivory Coast.

This is a phenomenon which it will be very interesting to study in depth later on. The forestry enterprises are highly labour-intensive, and in this under-populated region there will be problems - there are already problems - of competition in the use of labour between these capitalist enterprises and the traditional farms.

A description of the patterns of traditional farming which we know quite well, as well as those of the forestry enterprises, could have helped us to glimpse the nature of the conflict. But information on the latter is very difficult to obtain. Hence, for this first memorandum we will confine ourselves to presenting the general background of the operations, i.e. the Eastern province and the main agricultural enterprises, leaving till later the gradual extension of the debate on competition in the use of manpower.

Our memorandum will therefore consist of two parts:

- The province of East Cameroon
- The agricultural enterprises in the East.

## I. THE PROVINCE OF EAST CAMEROON.

### 1.1 - General characteristics

With an area of 109,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the Eastern Region covers nearly a quarter of the national territory.

The combination of physical conditions leads to a differentiation into three major natural zones:

- The forest zone covers about 71% of the area of the region. It is formed by a medium-altitude plateau sloping to the South-east. The climate is of the equatorial type with four seasons; the average annual rainfall varies between 1500 and 1700 mm. There is a dense hydrographic network. The soils are relatively rich but fragile.

- The savanna zone, situated in the North-east, covers about 21.5% of the area of the region. It consists of a plateau which rises towards the Adamoua up to an altitude of 1000 m. As one goes further north, the four-season climate becomes more pronounced and drier, the rainfall goes down to 1,300 mm and the dry season becomes longer. The hydrographic network is less dense and the soils relatively poorer and more eroded. The savanna includes by some forest galleries.

- The transition zone has features midway between the two previous zones. It covers about 7.5% of the area of the region. Typical of this zone is the mixture of forest and savanna which stems from an irregular clearing of the forest.

The physical environment is still a fundamental factor in the development of the East.

The region numbers a population of 288,000, which corresponds to a density of 2.6/km<sup>2</sup>. The under-population which is one of the fundamental features of the region is less pronounced in the central zone than in the forest or the savanna, where the population is concentrated along the communication routes. The overall rate of population growth is estimate at 2%.

The population is divided among four major groups: Bantu, semi-Bantu, Sudanese and Pygmies.

The economy of the East is based on agriculture in which 91% of the population is engaged. The ecological conditions are favourable to export crops such as coffee and cocoa in the forest zone, to which are added, in the savanna zone, tobacco for cigar wrapping, and in the region as a whole the food crops (banana, plantain, cassava, groundnut, maize etc.)

The savanna zone offers definite potentialities as regards animal husbandry. A small herd of 65,000 head has been counted there.

Although logging is not yet developed, it has a brilliant future since the Eastern region represent 53% of the forestry potential of Cameroon.

With regard to infrastructure, the region is far behind the national average: the communications network is very inadequate and large areas are still enclaves; the network is embryonic. The school and health infrastructure does not meet the needs. In general the regional space is still unorganized.

#### 1.2. - Fundamental problems.

The problems of the Eastern region are many, but the main problems can be grouped around three themes:

##### 1) Deficient organization of production

The large number of agricultural products on a small surface, the traditional farming methods, the lack of agricultural equipment, are all problems faced by agricultural development in the East. All this entails a low productivity, in a region which is in any case underpopulated.

Moreover the marketing difficulties, the defective organization of the saving and credit channels, the inadequate supervision and structuration of the rural population and the poor integration of the existing structures for action, are obstacles to an efficient organization of production.

In the field of animal husbandry, almost everything has still to be done to take advantage of the potential of the East.

The agricultural processing industry and handicrafts, already poorly developed, confront difficulties of supply and marketing because of bad organization.

Forest exploitation remains isolated from the economic environment, on which it exerts few linkage effects.

2) Under-population and manpower problems:

The under-population of the region is a handicap to the achievement of regional development: nevertheless some zones are more dense than others and hence less handicapped from the start. Because of the bad health conditions, there is a danger that the natural increase of the population will be checked and its dynamism affected.

However, the improvement of the living conditions and of the environment, such as by the creation of collective equipment and the installation of new units of intensive production in all sectors, is likely to hold back the emigration of young people and to induce more rapid economic growth.

Under-population and the emigration of young people are accompanied by a shortage of skilled manpower which is a great obstacle to the development of the East.

3) Lack of organization of the regional space:

This poor organization is the result of:

- the inadequate transport network, the fact that it is impracticable in some seasons and is badly maintained, which leads to the disarticulation of the region and the perpetuation of enclaves, thus hindering the exchanges of persons and goods and culminating in a defective marketing, particularly of foodstuffs;

- the lack of rapid and reliable links both between the different urban centres of the region and between the centres themselves and their zone of influence;

- the weakness of the urban network, which fails to crystallize the region's development around poles and cannot offer the possibility of real urban life, which is an essential condition for industrial development and for keeping supervisory personnel (cadres) in the region.

- the inadequate integration of the regional staff with the major road arteries such as the "Transcamerounais" and the route nationale No. 1.

The structuration of space is essential for achieving regional development. The very favourable prospects offered by logging may be of no advantage to the Eastern region because it has a natural tendency to create economic units which have no impact on the surroundings. To avoid having the East become a zone of product evacuation, forest exploitation must be integrated with the whole economy of the region.

1.3. - Development prospects.

The development potentialities focus on three main aspects.

1) Increasing production:

The agricultural potentialities of the region make it possible to increase output considerably. This can be done by combining a number of measures.

The structuration of the rural environment with a view to making the peasant a real farmer responsible for his future will be based on the creation of occupational structures through integrated action. The structures of production will be modernized, for example by acting on the production techniques and farming patterns.

To modernize the production structures, it is necessary to bring about a real mutation with respect to the peasant farmer's capital equipment. A rise in labour productivity depends on new methods of production which require a large initial outlay which the peasant farmer cannot provide. Hence farm credit is essential. When all these conditions are fulfilled, efforts should be centered on the development of export crops and food crops.

Plant protection treatments and the regeneration of cocoa and coffee plantations are to be intensified.

Since tobacco production remains stationary, it will be necessary to contemplate new cash crops in the tobacco regions.

The development of food crops will meet the triple concern of preventing a serious imbalance in favour of industrial crops, of providing incomes in the savanna zone, and of ensuring the supply of the local market which will be expanding, particularly because of forest exploitation.

All these actions in the rural areas must be coordinated with a view to maximum consistency and efficiency.

The development of pastoral potentialities will be based on the modernization of the present traditional animal husbandry, particularly through capital equipment and "animation" and through the gradual introduction of methods of intensive stock-breeding particularly fattening.

Industrial and handicraft production will be mainly geared to wood and the processing of agricultural produce. Wood must be the mainstay of industrial and handicraft activities which are as diversified as possible. There is a need to promote the constitution of large-scale production units and, if possible, to locate them in urban centres so as to stimulate the dynamism of the centres.

2) Improving the productive forces.

In an under-populated region like that of the East, all wastage of the productive forces must be avoided. A four fold action must be undertaken:

- the dynamism of the population must be preserved and strengthened by setting up an efficient health infrastructure and by generalized educational measures.

- the exodus of young people from the region must be limited as far as possible by improving living conditions as a whole and by specific measures of supervision, "animation" and training.

- immigration can be stimulated, experimentally at first. The area crossed by the Transcameroon road has favourable conditions in this respect. Amalgamations of population are also possible.

- vocational training should be given to young people and adults with a view to providing the East with a manpower both skilled and adapted to the development prospects of the region.

3) Regional physical planning.

The structuring of regional space is essential for the emergence of a regional life without which there could be no development.

The physical planning of the region is related to several factors:

- Forest exploitation which will be the great asset of the East in the future, will have to be integrated with the economy of the region so that the region can take full advantage of it. The problems to be solved are both complex and urgent, so that it would seem desirable to deal with them in the context of a specific regional space planning body.

The transport network will be improved and supplemented so as to free some zones from isolation, to ensure the essential inter-regional links and to increase the use of the existing main arteries. For example the forest roads must be integrated as far as possible with an overall and consistent road system.

The embryo urban network will be reinforced by a policy of providing all kinds of infrastructure: for industry, schools, health, culture etc. These centres will have to play the part of poles of attraction and propagation vis-à-vis their environment. In particular, Bertona must be provided with the infrastructure needed to enable it to fulfil its role as regional capital.

The infrastructure will be adapted to the urban hierarchy adopted: regional capital, secondary poles, central villages.

The organization of efficient commercial structures and circuits, backed by the urban centres and the transport and communications network, will help to develop intra-regional and inter-regional trade.

The development prospects will be combined differently within the three major space planning zones of the East:

- the Northern zone geared to animal husbandry, forestry, food crops and tobacco.

- the Central zone, corresponding to the transition zone, which is the most densely populated zone, endowed with a better transport network and containing most of the multi-purpose urban centres.

- the Southern zone, geared to forestry and agriculture which must be properly linked up with the rest of the region.

The rapid development of the East would certainly be helped by the introduction of a physical plan capable of solving the physical and human problems which face the region at present.

## II. THE AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES IN THE EAST

As we have just seen, the Eastern province faces many problems for its development. The State technical departments, particularly Agriculture, are trying to give guidance to the small growers. But the real advantages of this province have attracted foreign capitalists who exploit timber, tobacco and coffee. The possible abuses of these firms have induced the State to set up a mixed-economy company to promote the development of this province by supervising the small growers. We will describe the capitalist firms quite frankly before dwelling on the mixed-economy company created by the State.

### 2.1. - The capitalist firms

There are three main kinds of firms in this province:

- the logging companies which exploit the forest
- the "industrial coffee plantations"
- the SFCT (Société Franco-Camerounaise des Tabacs)

#### a) The SFCT

This company has the marketing monopoly of the cigar wrapper tobacco produced by small isolated growers. The agents of the company assist the growers in the production season by providing seeds, agricultural extension and credit for the purchase of working tools. The growing of cigar-wrapper tobacco poses many problems. The plants must be constantly watered, which means that the growers have to stay on their plantations for long times at a stretch. Thus the villages are deserted; the children who go with their parents stay away from school; the prolonged bending position of the growers affects their health. Tobacco incomes are relatively low in comparison with the effort supplied. Furthermore the sorting of the tobacco when bought involves a sudden need for a large amount of labour and the schools are emptied of their pupils.

Cigar-wrapper tobacco continues to be cultivated because it is in a way Cameroon's pride. We are in fact the second world producer after Indonesia. But the problem of the seasonal demand for labour remains. Indeed the company intervenes in certain specific zones. Its interest in the problem which concern us is not so obvious as that of the logging companies to which we will now turn.

b) The logging companies

The number of logging companies has suddenly increased recently. After the relative impoverishment of the Ivory Coast's forest, the former loggers of Ivory Coast are coming to Cameroon. The lumber is hardly processed at all; it is exported in the form of logs. It is true that the "specifications" include certain clauses, but it is difficult to check on their observance. The popularity of these companies stems mainly from the effort they make (of which the necessity of them is often forgotten) to maintain the roads. Many labourers work on these. They live in camps.

Because of their large number, the logging companies will involve a serious medium-term problem with respect to manpower. A rapid modernization of traditional farming must be undertaken so as to enable young men to leave the village plantations without great detriment. But the return of these young men will pose many problems because logging is a temporary activity especially if there is no reforestation policy. This modernization of traditional farming is being promoted by the mixed-economy company which we will speak of later. Let us first look at the 3rd type of capitalist company: the "industrial coffee plantations".

c) The industrial coffee plantations

The "industrial coffee plantations" are a type of company of particular interest to us because they compete directly with the village plantations for manpower.

It might be thought that there are some advantages in turning young village growers into agricultural wage-earners in the industrial plantations:

- reduction of manpower in the villages plantations and hence of disguised unemployment
- opportunities for these young men to learn sound production techniques
- possibility, through their comings and goings, to introduce innovations in the village.

But in actual fact the departure of these young men, besides depriving the villages of a dynamic, relatively well-trained manpower, adversely affects those who remain: the village, without its elements of change, continues to evolve slowly. The coming and going of these young men between the industrial plantations and the village farms, far from helping to introduce new techniques into the village farms, rather discourages the villagers because of the astounding descriptions which are given of the industrial plantations.

The young men have very little opportunity to learn new techniques because they are often engaged in badly-paid subordinate jobs, which leads to frequent absenteeism on their part. Despite this, the monthly wage - regarded as more attractive than the annual income - prevents them from deciding to settle permanently as farmers. The most serious aspect of these industrial plantations is not that they belong to foreigners; it is that they idealize coffee-growing as opposed to food crops. Hence the efforts being made by the State to re-structure farming with the help of supervisory companies.

2.2. - The Regional Development Corporation of the ZAPI (Zones d'Actions Prioritaires Intégrées) of the East

221 Origin and Organization of the ZAPI

a) Origin

The ZAPI project came into being with the preparation of our 2nd Five-Year Plan. The improvement of the 2nd Plan over the 1st lies in the fact that the 2nd Plan was regionalized. For this regionalization the Government called upon a private French company called CINAM (Compagnie d'Etudes Industrielles et d'Aménagement du Territoire) which specializes in this type of work. CINAM worked in the provinces of Centre-South and East. It is while working on the preparation of this 2nd plan that CINAM conceived the idea of the ZAPI.

We have observed that after a satisfactory start most sectors, particularly the agricultural sector, quickly reached a certain stagnation the causes of which could not a priori be detected.

We felt it was the lack of integration which caused this stagnation. In other words, the integration of activities is the only suitable development policy for zones which have reached a certain threshold.

Therefore one of the basic ideas of the ZAPI project is the idea of integration, which will have as a consequence the institution of a simple organizing body in each zone.

We have noticed something else: basically the peasant farmers are not poor. They finance a large part of the country's economy. They can therefore finance their own development themselves. Hence the idea of setting up a single organizing body for each zone in the form of a profitable enterprise. That is the substance of the project which was submitted to the government in 1966 and which covered 3 points:

- To circumscribe homogeneous zones under different criteria, such as accessibility, population density and production capacity.
- To set up in each of these zones a single organizing body whose task would be to integrate the activities undertaken by various agents, including itself.
- To set up this organizing body in the form of a profitable private enterprise.

The Government having approved this project, its implementation culminated in the organization which we will now describe.

b) Overall organization of the ZAPI

At the level of each "ZAPI" zone (Zone d'Actions Prioritaires Intégrées) which covers between 2,500 and 4,000 growers, there is a single organizing body in the form of an enterprise called E.P.L. (Entreprise de Progrés Local).

This enterprise consists of several sections which fulfil firstly the functions of development (training extension work, social problems) and secondly the functions of a firm (marketing, accounting, garage-workshop. It is divided into several branches whose sphere of action covers about ten villages, usually ethnically homogeneous. The branch is directed by a Branch Manager (Gérant de Succursale) who heads a team of 3 or 4 "Promoting Monitors" (Monsteurs Promoteurs).

This "Local Progress Enterprise" which is intended as a "home base", is responsible for organizing the harmonized development of the ZAPI with the help of all the other development services and agents.

The essence of the ZAPI project related to the zone.

At provincial level, there is a multi-purpose ZAPI Regional Mission whose most important functions are the creation of new ZAPI, the training of EPL Senior Staff and coordination between the EPL. The Regional Mission consists of various technicians, the impact of whose competence is far from negligible at regional and even national level.

The organization of the Regional Mission is designed to maximize the efficiency of its technical support of the various EPL services particularly in the field of agronomy, management-marketing, and training.

At present the Eastern ZAPI supervise nearly 10,000 planters distributed among 150 villages. They market nearly 10% of the cocoa of the Eastern province and 25% of its coffee.

Since 27 September 1972, the whole ZAPI operation in each province has taken the legal form of a Regional Development Corporation in the context of a law on Development Corporations with the subscription, as regards the Eastern ZAPI, of a capital of 130,600,000 Fr. CFA, contributed mainly by the State and secondarily by the peasant farmers. Nevertheless 1/3 of the members of the Board of Directors are peasant farmers. The Regional Mission has turned into a "Direction Générale", itself divided into two "Directions": an Administrative, Financial and Commercial Direction and a Direction of Studies and Programmes.

The important change which the adoption of the structures makes to the project is that we are now superseding the old concept of self-financing, since our corporation is in fact composed of two enterprises: a commercial enterprise which conducts commercial operations and makes profits, and a promoting enterprise the purpose of which is to promote other enterprises, especially peasant farms. By methods resembling cost-benefit analysis techniques, it is possible to measure the efficiency of the latter enterprise. In the present rural situation, the peasant farms are not yet capable of running this promotion enterprise, which must therefore be entirely subsidized by the State.

222. Summary assessment

The ZAPI project set itself three targets:

- the increasing of incomes,
- the participation of growers,
- the self-financing of the enterprises.

The present community directly involved was only concerned with the first two targets. In fact, over a medium-term period the self-financing target is an intermediate target whose assessment is only of short-term interest.

We will therefore focus our thinking on the first two targets an on the oldest ZAPI, that of NGUELEMENDOUKA.

a) The increasing of incomes

According to a survey conducted in the ZAPI of N'KA from 20/3/71 to 30/6/71 with the help of the Department of Agriculture, the average income of the local grower rose from 32,000 F in 1967/68 to 55,000 F in 1970/71, i.e. in three years, an average annual rate of growth of nearly 20% as against the 12% expected.

Of course this is only money income and the calculations cover only 3 years instead of 5. But it is certain that real incomes are rising because of the combination of increased production and the introduction of fairer marketing methods.

During the experimental phase, the average output per grower at N'KA was evaluated as follows:

	<u>Average output per planter in kg.</u>				
	67-68	68-69	69-70	70-71	71-72
Cocoa	70	79	129	134	150
Marketed coffee	159	175	238	365	266

The increase in incomes entails two consequences:

- self-financing is not included
- the "Moniteur Promoteur" is superseded.

First of all, self-financing was not achieved. The own resources and the costs of the EPL of N'KA were evaluated as follows in millions of francs:

	67-68	68-69	69-70	70-71	71-72	Average
Own resources	12.19	20.34	35.26	47.73	38.56	30.82
Costs	19.35	33.53	39.97	50.52	46.82	38.04
Percentage self-financing	63%	61%	88%	94%	82%	81%

It therefore seems that if the budgets are properly kept to and if the marketed products are upgraded (export or processing), self-financing can be achieved at N'KA. It seems, however desirable to transfer to the State certain fixed costs so that a net profit may be obtained in the short term to be used as finance for local development.

As for the Promoting Monitor, he is now superseded both as regards his grade and his extension methods. As we have said, the increased incomes are mainly due to the success of the integrated agricultural extension programmes. That is to say, the average grower has already assimilated the currently advocated techniques of agricultural production. It seems therefore that the traditional Monitor has become increasingly outmoded.

b) The participation of the local growers

This participation has only just started, probably because of the restrictive nature of the commercial operations and of the self-financing target.

However, the EPL is beginning to organize self-managed operations such as marketing and credit. For their part the growers are showing their confidence in the EPL by electing authentic leaders to the Comités de Développement Villageois (CODEVI) as opposed to what they used to do.

Owing to this favourable circumstance we can hope henceforth to go quite far in the direction of an increased participation of the growers, in particular:

- by a more spontaneous organization of the local growers based on specific activities,
- by making the peasant farming structures play the role of counterweight to the EPL at all levels,
- by a wide dissemination of information to the growers.

In conclusion, we note that the average income of the growers has increased thanks to the combined action of higher producers' prices, increased production and sound marketing. Therefore self-financing no longer seems impossible to attain, and we must think about the new role of the Monitor. True local growers' participation is only beginning, but because of the trust which seems to prevail between the growers and the EPL, it is possible to contemplate the future with confidence.

#### CONCLUSION

The emergence of agrarian capitalism in the province of East Cameroon is very interesting to study, particularly from the angle of competition in the use of manpower. Unfortunately it is still difficult to obtain figures in this connexion. We intend to carry out a systematic search for this information from the enterprises concerned during the coming months. Meanwhile we simply wanted to prepare the ground for a more systematic analysis by describing the Eastern province and the main agricultural enterprises operating there.