

Peasant Types and Revolutionary Potential in Colonial Africa



by Don Barnett

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years we have become increasingly aware of the fact that the classical subject matter of anthropology, i.e. the "isolated" primitive tribe of Africa, Oceania, etc., is in reality part of a larger society the nature of which significantly affects that of the tribe community or group under study. The "tribe" of today no longer sets the limits — politically, economically or geographically — on the society of which it constitutes but a part. It has been incorporated, often involuntarily, into states and empires within which it normally occupies a subordinate position; and its resources in land and labor have, to one degree or another, been affected by and linked in a number of ways to the money economy of the modern state and world market. It is, in short, impinged upon by external forces which are beyond its power to control and which in most cases constitute significant factors in shaping its present structure and future development.

Since the vast majority of pre-industrial peoples engaged in one form or another of subsistence agriculture, part of the recognition by anthropologists of their incorporation within larger societies has been a shift in emphasis from "tribe" to "peasantry". Although phrased in a variety of ways, most current definitions of "peasantry" recognize its link with the larger society. Thus from Redfield's "There were no peasants before the first cities" (1953:31) to Steward's consideration of peasantries as "horizontal socio-cultural segments" (1950:115), one is urged to shift his attention from the vanished isolated "tribe" to the rural agricultural aggregates which most have become, and to their relations with the larger societies of which they form a part. Without entering into the academic and semantic squabbles concerning appropriate labels (e.g. "folk", "peasant", "intermediate", "composite", etc.) and definitions, one can detect a trend in the literature on peasantries from an early emphasis on the *internal* nature of "iso-

lated" peasant communities to the more recent concern with *relationships* between peasant communities and the larger society. Casagrande (1959:3 ff), while critical of Steward's emphasis on socio-cultural levels and their formal characteristics rather than on the lines of connection between them, calls attention to the latter's reproach that "Most studies...have treated the community as if it were a primitive tribe — that is, as if it were a self-contained structure and functional whole which could be understood in terms of itself alone (1950:22), and to his statement concerning "The formal institutions which constitute the bones, nerves and sinews running throughout the total society, binding it together and affecting it at every point" (1950: 115). Lewis (1955:168) suggests that since "All tribal and peasant societies have some relations with the outside...it might therefore be more profitable to compare the nature, occasions, and quality of these relations," than the individual peasant communities themselves.

While emphasizing the relation of the peasantry with the larger society it is important to note that often the major, and in some cases the only, link between peasant communities themselves is their mutually subordinate position within the modern state and imperialist structures. It must be remembered that in most instances when referring to the peasantry as a "class" (Kroeber) or "socio-cultural segment" (Steward), we are speaking of an analytical category such as "white-collar workers," which is comprised of like units but which is *not* organized on behalf of its members' mutual interests. This distinction is important since one of the major scientific questions in the study of rural agricultural producers is their tendency or ability to organize on a supra-community level, and the factors which condition or inhibit such organization. Mintz, for example, noted the rural labor unions which emerged among the sugar workers of Puerto Rico (1955), linking these rural producers in a large supra-community economic association. In Africa certain types of peasant producers have tended to join cooperative societies uniting numerous local units for specific economic ends, and which were sometimes in a position to exert strong political pressures on colonial and state institutions (e.g. the Cocoa Marketing Boards of Ghana and Nigeria). Karl Marx, in reference to the freeholding peasants of mid-19th century France, observed that "The small peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions, but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse" (1852:109).

Is it that certain types of agricultural production give rise to or inhibit the formation of non-local peasant organizations? Or that certain types of peasantry are more or less easily united around their common interests within national economic or political organizations? Can different types of peasantry be systematically linked with different degrees of *revolutionary potential* among rural populations? If so, what are these types and what are the internal and external factors and forces which give rise to them? One of the purposes of this paper is to shed some light on these questions with respect to African peasantries.

Thus far we have not considered the differences between the various kinds of agricultural producers. Wolf, in his work on Latin American peasantries, distinguishes between "peasants" and "tenants" largely in terms of differences in land tenure and control over the processes of production and separates both from the capitalist "farmer", (1955:454-5). Sorokin, in an earlier work, distinguished two "classes of cultivators from the standpoint of the kind of land proprietorship." These include "owners" (individual and collective) and "non-owners" (tenants, laborers and employees) (1930:559). The above terms and definitions employed by these and other students of rural agricultural producers must in the last analysis be justified in terms of their respective explanatory value. They do not appear to me to be very useful in dealing with contemporary African rural populations. Many "traditional" African groupings and economies are undergoing rapid and, in some cases, dynamic changes. In the twilight of direct colonial rule in Africa, colonial governments initiated a number of new policies and schemes for rural development, involving changes in land tenure systems, population movements and alterations in trade and marketing relations. Again, political independence has in many new African countries ushered in further and, in a few cases, more sweeping changes in the rural scene. In these circumstances I believe it more useful to employ a more inclusive definition of "peasantry" and to focus attention on the processes of change and development as well as on the characteristics of existing "rural aggregates".

With the exception of a relatively small though growing percentage of Africans permanently residing in urban centers or cut off completely from their indigenous economies as squatters or laborers on European farms or plantations,

the vast majority of Africans are tied economically, as well as in other ways, to the rural agricultural economies of their "native areas." The cash brought or sent home by the migrant rural or urban worker is an essential element in the indigenous agricultural economies, and the latter individual, returning to his land between sojourns to the mines or plantations, and in his old age, is an important member of his rural community. Following a United Nations study*, then, we shall be concerned with "rural aggregates" within the "indigenous agricultural economies" which include "all those economic activities which take place within the framework of the indigenous social organization" and comprise "resources of land and labor employed both in subsistence production and in production for sale." In addition, "migrant workers employed by non-indigenous enterprise 'outside' the indigenous agricultural economy are considered as belonging to the indigenous agricultural economies, since their economic status depends in part on their retention of a role in the indigenous agricultural economies with the expectation of their eventual return" (1954:2).

The term "rural aggregate", as here utilized, refers to a rural population — linked politically and economically to a larger social system — the majority of whose members engage in agricultural labor with the aim of satisfying their basic subsistence requirements. We will exclude from specific consideration those rural groupings which are settled, either in temporary or permanent residence, on European (and in a few cases, African) farms or plantations as tenants or squatters. The squatter or migrant worker will be considered in relation to his peasant community rather than in the social context of the plantation, farm or urban setting in which he temporarily resides.

By "peasantry" we shall mean the majority segment of a rural aggregate, whose members engage in agricultural production for the purpose of satisfying their primary subsistence needs. A "peasant" is thus distinguished from a "farmer," who aims at profit and reinvestment rather than subsistence and consumption and who works his land primarily with hired labor.

While there are a few cases of European "tillers of the soil" (e.g. in Angola, Mozambique, South-West Africa, the Union of South Africa and North Africa), the vast majority

**Enlargement of the Exchange Economy in Tropical Africa*, U.N., 1954.

of Europeans engaged in agricultural production are owners or managers of medium and large-scale agricultural enterprises worked by hired African laborers or squatters. They will, for our purposes, be considered one of the key *external* variables which significantly impinge on peasant aggregates and greatly influence their development and present condition.

In view of their great empirical variety, any attempt to formulate a typology of African peasantries in the space of a short paper must deal with rather gross criteria and, as Wolf has indicated (1955:455), be concerned initially and primarily with economic and socio-political phenomena, and with structure rather than cultural content. My attempt will be to delineate the major types of African peasantry within the colonial period in a preliminary manner, recognizing that each of these types contains numerous subtypes, and that the major types themselves, being analyzed out on the basis of selected and limited criteria, are highly tentative and open to future revision. For various reasons, primary among which were the availability of data and the writer's limitations in time and linguistic skills, the data for this typology were drawn mainly from tropical and southern Africa and, within this area, largely from British or ex-British colonies.*

Since we are concerned with processes of change as well as characteristics of contemporary peasant types, the first section will set forth some of the basic features of pre-colonial systems of cultivation and land tenure, and distinguish broadly between two types of traditional political systems. In the second section, four categories of what are here termed 'conditional variables' will be indicated and discussed with respect to the kinds of influence they exert on African peasantries, and in the third section we shall consider some of the distinguishing features of three of the peasant types which the latter have given rise to.

*When data are drawn from studies made prior to the recent independence of the country concerned, the name of the Territory at the time the study was made will here be used.

I. PRE-COLONIAL SYSTEMS OF CULTIVATION, LAND TENURE AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Over most of the African continent, with the exception of the oasis and flood-plain agriculture in the northern territories, the traditional system of agriculture was, and largely remains today, that of "shifting" cultivation of a wide variety of subsistence crops. The system of shifting cultivation or bush fallowing, while differing somewhat in the forest areas and savannah zones, everywhere involves cultivating the land for as many years as it remains fertile (usually 3 or 4) and then allowing it to revert to bush until it regains its fertility. This practice, as Hailey indicates, "was only made possible by the superabundance of land...(and)...is based on a simple economy in which groups of persons co-operate in a system of mutual obligation to produce the necessities of life" (1957:820). Given the generally poor quality of African soil, the existing implements of cultivation, i.e. the hoe and axe, and the usual abundance of land, the traditional system of shifting cultivation was in most cases adequate. "The African tradition of cultivation," says Hailey, "although empiric, recognizes a system of rotation of crops, the usage of soils, and the means of fertilization; it sometimes even combines anti-erosion measures, which are often well adapted to the prevailing conditions of labor and climate" (1957:821). Production, then, was almost exclusively for the satisfaction of immediate consumption needs — with a varying amount of local trade being engaged in with the surpluses of subsistence production — and traditional practices of cultivation required a great deal more land than would at any one time be under cultivation, particularly when animal stock was kept in addition to agriculture.

The traditional attitude of the African toward the land is well expressed by a Nigerian chief, who says, "I conceive that land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living, and countless members are still unborn" (Meek: 1949). In summarizing the main characteristics of indigenous African systems of land-holding, Meek states that they:

are devised to meet the needs of a subsistence system of agriculture and depend on a sufficiency of land to allow of a rotation which includes a long period of fallow. Land is held on (a) a kinship, and/or (b) a local group basis. Individuals have definite rights, but these are qualified by member-

ship of a family, kindred and ward (or small village). Similarly, the individual claims of families exist concurrently with the wider claims of the clan or local group. Title, therefore, has a community character...The chief is the custodian of land, but not its owner. The normal unit of land ownership is the extended-family, or kindred. Land once granted to a family remains the property of that family, and the chief has no right to any say in its disposal (1949:26-7).

The land, then, is not treated as a commodity to be sold or rented for a profit, and membership in the land-holding group confers rights over land. This latter point, says Gluckman is "the essence of African communal ownership of land" (1944:16). If we consider systems of land tenure as *clusters of rights over land and its products*, the African systems of land tenure are almost universally characterized by (a), the right of every individual to the productive use of some land by virtue of his "citizenship" in a given group or tribe and (b), the overlapping of rights to land and its products among individuals and groups, which manifests itself in (c), rigid prohibitions against individual disposal of land, over which a person has specific but never absolute rights. With respect to these characteristics, African land tenure systems contrast sharply with those of the European colonial powers, which are characterized by the absence of individual guarantees to land, individual ownership of land, and the right of individual disposal.

Concerning traditional African political systems, it is convenient for present purposes to distinguish, largely in terms of political stratification, between two broad categories. The first, including segmentary systems such as among the Tallensi, age-grade systems as among the Kikuyu and other unstratified systems, are referred to simply as *egalitarian structures*. The second, including the traditional African kingdoms (e.g. Ashanti, Dahomey, etc.) and the feudal-like systems of the northern regions of West Africa (e.g. Nupe, etc.), are termed *hierarchical structures*. As we shall see, this difference in structure often affected the way in which African societies were incorporated within the colonial system and the manner and degree of their participation in the cash economies of the colonial powers.

II. CONDITIONAL VARIABLES

In this section we shall consider some of the key categories of phenomena which have conditioned the emergence and transition of African societies from relatively closed systems of subsistence agriculture based on shifting cultivation, to the various types of modern African peasantry which are irrevocably linked in terms of their consumption needs to the money economies of the larger societies of which they form a part. These categories include: (1) natural environmental factors; (2) the nature of peasant involvement in the cash economy; (3) the extent and type of European settlement, and (4) the accessibility of transport facilities and market centers.

With the exception of the North African peasantries engaged in flood-plain cultivation, most of Africa's peasants occupy one of the two major climatic zones of Africa. These are (1) the moist equatorial zone with well-distributed annual rainfall, which is best suited to perennial crops such as bananas, cocoa, coffee and palm oil, and (2) the savannah areas with varying annual rainfall, which are suited to annual crops such as tobacco, cotton and ground-nuts. The distinction between perennial and annual crops is important since, given the prevailing methods of cultivation, the production of the latter cannot be highly specialized.* The production by African peasants of perennial crops such as cocoa, coffee and palm oil, which do not require heavy initial capital outlays, tends not only towards a heavy reliance on a single commercial crop and, hence, dependence on the demand and price of their commodity on the world market, but also exerts pressure favoring a shift in tenure from communal to individual holdings. Thus Fazan states that "it is generally admitted to be a fact that planted trees and permanent crops play a prominent part in bringing about individual tenure" (1944:49), and Meek notes that "many subsistence agriculturists have taken to the growing of plantation crops with the result that land which was formerly the collective property of the group has now become the private property of individual members of the group, with new rights of transfer and new rules of inheritance" (1949:3). Additional features often associated with African peasant production of perennials for export include the necessity of importing large amounts of food crops for consumption and the use of hired labor, though this latter

*See appendix for principal production areas of cocoa, coffee, cotton and ground-nuts.

feature is also present in certain areas of cotton and ground-nut production (e.g. Senegal and Uganda).

With regard to African peasant involvement in the cash economy — necessitated first by the European demand that he pay taxes in cash and later by the acquiring of needs for European products and services — it is useful to distinguish analytically between two different processes of commercialization of the traditional African economies. Though both are present in specific cases, there is a marked tendency for rural Africans to seek the cash they require either through (1) production for market sale or (2) wage employment. Which course is followed has significant ramifications for the peasant community involved. As noted in a United Nations publication entitled *Special Study on Economic Conditions in Non-Self-Governing Territories*:

Where the transition (from a subsistence to a commercialized economy) takes the form of the production for market and the sale of produce, the dissolution of some of the traditional ways of living occurs usually with the formation within the local community of new institutional forms and functions. When the transition is dominated by the export of labor, the outflow of the peoples to the centers of employment, depleting the community of its manpower resources, results frequently in a radical change of traditional attitudes and ways of life without at the same time compensating for the disintegration of the old order by the growth of new local institutions (1956-7:116).

In another U.N. publication* three groups of African territories in Tropical Africa are distinguished in terms of the relative importance of "production for market or of wage employment in the commercialization of their indigenous agricultural economies." First are those "territories in which cash-cropping is mainly for overseas markets and there is little or no export of labor: French West Africa, Gold Coast, Nigeria and Uganda." Second, the "territories in which cash-cropping is combined with export of labor: Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa and Tanganyika;" and third, the "territories in which substantial export of labor is combined with limited agricultural production, mainly for internal markets: Kenya, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia" (1954:48). It will be noticed when we

**Enlargement of the Exchange Economy in Tropical Africa.*

consider our next variable, how this classification is related to the existence and scale of European settlement.

The nature and extent of European settlement has exerted a great, if not the greatest, influence on the development and present state of African peasant communities. To a large extent the policies of colonial powers with respect to the land and African use of it have been determined by the needs of Europeans in the various territories for African land and labor. The magnitude and type (rural or urban) of European settlement, on the other hand, has itself been highly influenced by the availability of cheap African labor and raw materials (mineral or vegetable) and, primarily, by the "hospitability" of the natural environment. Thus Hailey notes that "...the extent of the appropriation of the indigenous lands has depended more on factors of soil and climate than on juridical arguments...It is considerations of climate and soil which have directed the stream of European settlement to southern and eastern rather than to western Africa" (1957:686).

The effects of this settlement, particularly in the Union of South Africa, South-West Africa, Nyasaland (Malawi) and the Rhodesias, Swaziland, the Belgian Congo (Zaire), Kenya and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, have been manifold. The European demand for land is closely linked with the need for cheap African labor to work it; hence the colonial governments usually alienated much more African land than their colonizers could put to productive use so as to force Africans out of their over-crowded "reserves" and into the European labor centers. The result of this policy of land alienation was to greatly restrict the lands under African cultivation, which in turn, under existing systems of shifting cultivation, has created a great pressure on the land and forced the African, in need of cash to supplement the diminishing rewards of his agricultural labor, into the labor markets created by European mining and agricultural enterprises. Richards points this out vividly, generalizing on her Bemba study: "In many parts of Africa the natives are trying to produce the same amount of food as they did formerly from lands that have been cut down to a fraction of their original size and are thus heavily over-stocked and often badly eroded," resulting in a situation in which the "...male labor supply of tribes in many rural areas of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and the Union has been halved by the constant migration to and from the mines and the towns to the country, and in such

cases agricultural production has inevitably decreased" (1939:4).

European settlement thus affected the nature of African peasant involvement in the cash economy, usually forcing him to combine a deteriorating subsistence agriculture with employment for wages in the centers of European enterprise. The cultivation of cash crops by Africans in these areas was greatly inhibited, not only by the absence of male labor, the limited and deteriorating conditions of their lands, and the alienation by Europeans of the best lands, but also by restrictions imposed by the colonial governments on commercial cultivation by Africans, whose production of cash crops would both diminish the supply of "free" labor available to European employers and compete with the latter's products on the local or world market. As indicated by the Wilsons:

Competition for land is closely associated with competition for markets for agricultural produce. Not only do European farmers seek a monopoly of land near railways; they seek also a monopoly of the more profitable crops. Settler pressure against the development of market crops by Africans is strong in Northern Rhodesia, and though their influence is less in Tanganyika, settlers there spoke bitterly to us of the right of Africans to produce coffee, which they felt should be a monopoly of Europeans. In neighboring territories monopolies for European farmers in certain crops have been secured — Africans in Kenya were forbidden to grow the more valuable coffee *arabica*; in the Union of South Africa the Maize Control Act operated against African growers and there was agitation for further protection. In Southern Rhodesia the Farmers' Association pressed for a monopoly in the home market in maize, wheat, and eggs for Europeans but failed to secure it (1945:137).

In those areas where climatic and other factors have mitigated against European settlement — e.g. in French West Africa, the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Uganda — cash-cropping tends to be the dominant form of cash acquisition by the local peasant aggregates, with wage earning outside the indigenous agricultural economy being relatively unimportant. We find, then, a striking set of mutually exclusive correlations. On the one hand, *European settlement* (with its aforementioned ramifications) and the export of male labor

from the local peasant communities (e.g. in Kenya, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Swaziland, the Union and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique) and, on the other hand, the *relative absence of European settlement*, combined with a predominance of peasant cash-cropping (e.g. in Nigeria, the Gold Coast, French West Africa and Uganda). In some territories (e.g. Tanganyika, Belgian Congo and French Equatorial Africa), the statistical situation for each territory as a whole is not so clear cut, and there is a greater degree of regional variation with respect to the influence of European settlement on the indigenous peasant aggregates.

The development of transport facilities in Africa, with the possible exception of lake and river transport, has been undertaken largely with a view to aiding in the establishment of European extractive industries and enhancing the effectiveness of colonial control over the indigenous population. In most cases, rail and road networks have been built and financed by capitalist investors or their governments in a given area solely with the aim of reducing marketing costs and without the slightest consideration for African peasants in the area. Nevertheless, the presence of these facilities has enabled a few peasant aggregates to profitably engage in cash-crop production for export. The absence of such facilities, on the other hand, inhibits the development of such production for the majority of peasant producers. As stated in a U.N. publication:* "In Africa, the large areas of subsistence agriculture are chiefly due to the absence, inadequacy or high cost of transport links with the rest of the economy. Often the only commodity that can readily be exported from such areas is the labor of the inhabitants" (1957-60:41). Again, Meek (1949:5) noted that "in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast the absence of suitable transport facilities has been a limiting factor in the production of crops for export, and this in turn has prevented the development of land tenure along the individualistic lines which are now characteristic of the Southern regions." We have already seen how, in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Europeans alienated land on the basis of its distance from the rail line, and this procedure has also been practiced in other areas of European settlement. Proximity to urban centers also has a determining influence on peasant production of subsistence or other

**Special Study on Economic Conditions in Non-Self-Governing Territories*

crops for sale in the internal market. Favorable or unfavorable location with respect to transportation facilities and market centers, then, is a key factor in determining the nature of a given peasantry's involvement in the cash economy.

The cocoa harvest



Cash-cropping peasants sell their produce on the internal market or to middlemen for export.

III. THREE TYPES OF AFRICAN PEASANTRY

1. CASH-CROPPING PEASANTRY

This type of peasantry is (a) found most frequently in the moist equatorial zone of well distributed annual rainfall, (b) engaged extensively in the commercial cultivation of perennials such as cocoa, coffee and oil palms, or annuals such as cotton and ground-nuts, (c) favorably located with respect to transportation and/or market facilities and (d) settled relatively densely in territories with little or no rural European settlement or industry. The best examples of this type of peasantry are found in the oil palm and cocoa growing regions of West Africa, the cotton and coffee growing areas of Uganda, the ground-nut regions of Senegal, and the highland coffee growing areas of Tanganyika.

The introduction of commercial crops and European demand for the latter, as well as for indigenous oil palm products, has exerted a great influence on African agriculture and land tenure. While there is a difference in degree between the perennial and annual cash-crop cultivators, there is a tendency in both cases toward a specialization of production. In the cocoa regions of Nigeria and Ghana there has developed an almost complete dependence on this single crop, which has resulted in a great reduction in the production of food crops and an increasingly heavy need for imports of the latter. In Uganda and other areas of commercial production of annual crops this tendency is inhibited by the necessity to rotate food crops with cotton, but there is nevertheless a growing expansion of cotton cultivation at the expense of food crops and a great degree of overcropping of the former. Particularly in the tree crop areas, there has been a shift away from the traditional methods of shifting cultivation to the cultivation of perennial commercial crops on stable holdings and the mechanization and modernization of many traditional agricultural practices.

The increased dependency of these crop-commercialized peasantries on the cultivation of a single marketable crop, together with the generally dense population found in these areas, has given rise to an increasing pressure on the land and a growing competition among peasants for what has come more and more to be considered as a scarce wealth-producing commodity. The traditional systems of land tenure under these circumstances have given way to more individual forms of tenure. Though usually through an adaptation of customary practices, land comes to be treated as a commodity to be sold, rented or leased, and traditional collective rights

and overlapping rights over the land and its products are replaced by an expanding sphere of individual rights. With the ownership of land rights passing from the kin or local group to individuals, the traditional right of every member of the tribe or local community to some land is disappearing; and with the disappearance of this fundamental feature of communal systems of land tenure, there began to emerge the landless peasant who, in one way or another, had to sell his labor to acquire tenant or squatter rights on the land of peasant "owners".

As commercial agriculture replaces subsistence cultivation and communal systems of tenure give way to individual ownership of land, human relationships in the sphere of production also tend to become commercialized at the expense of the old systems of mutual and reciprocal obligations, which were seated in the traditional social structure and value systems of the society. Cooperative forms of labor are replaced more and more by hired labor, and the reciprocal help previously given by kinsmen and neighbors must now usually be purchased. Thus Mair noted among the Buganda that:

many of the old social bonds no longer exist. The ties of kinship outside the individual household have lost most of their importance, while the household itself is a much smaller unit than it used to be... Success in life is now directly dependent upon economic effort; it is no longer the reward of qualities conceived to be socially desirable. For this very reason, there is now much less of the old readiness to share the fruits of success with those kinsmen who used to consider that they had a claim upon them... (1934:275-6).

Again, Forde states concerning the Nigerian cocoa "farmer" that "the system of mutual help at busy seasons is rapidly disappearing, and where family labor is insufficient to run the farm, it is supplemented by paid labor" (1945:252). Hired labor, then, has become an important factor in the indigenous economies of the crop-commercialized peasantries. In the Gold Coast these hired agricultural workers numbered approximately 250,000 in 1951, and in Uganda the number reached 100,000 in the same period (U.N. 1953:21). A correlate of the growing importance of hired labor is the shrinking of the economically cooperating kin-group and the increasingly important economic role of the small family unit of husband, wife or wives and children.

While most of the land holdings within this type of peas-

antry are quite small — usually from 2 to 4 or 6 acres — there has emerged alongside these in most regions a number of African estates of quite considerable size. This is particularly so in areas of traditionally hierarchical political systems where chiefs have been able, with the aid of colonial governments, to convert their political offices and *ex officio* economic rights over land into more or less individual rights over large tracts of land. Thus, according to Meek, "In many parts of Africa chiefs have tended to become landlords, and landlords have tended to assume the role of chiefs" (1949:7). Landlordism is thus a prominent feature of the crop-commercialized rural aggregate, and with it, of course, goes the use of hired and tenant labor.

In addition to the chiefs, many middlemen have also become absentee landlords and farmers. The peasant producer, often in need of cash for seed or other necessary items of production, and caught in a system of low and fluctuating prices for his product, finds himself in need of credit from money lenders or brokers and is often in a position of having mortgaged his crop long before it is ready to be harvested (Forde 1945:252). If unable to repay the usually usurious loan, the peasant is forced to pledge or otherwise give up his land to the middleman, who often leaves the former owner on the land as his tenant. While some of these money lenders are African, in most cases this role is played by immigrant ethnic minorities, such as the Indians in East Africa or the Lebanese and Syrians in West Africa.

The crop-commercialized rural aggregate, therefore, tends to be economically stratified, with (1) an upper strata of estate holders and farmers who work their lands exclusively or primarily with hired help and tenant labor, (2) a large sector of small-holding peasants who till the soil themselves, though sometimes with the aid of hired help, and (3) a relatively large lower stratum of tenants, hired laborers and landless peasants. These features are nowhere as developed in Tropical Africa as they are in the traditional rural aggregates of North Africa. This is due largely to the relative newness of cash-cropping in the former area and the various forms of government intervention on behalf of small-holding peasants against the money lenders and large estate holders. Nevertheless, in comparison with the other types we shall consider, the crop-commercialized rural aggregate exhibits a high degree of economic stratification and social differentiation, particularly in cases where the traditional political system was hierarchical.

There also exists within the cash-cropping rural aggregate a limited but relatively high degree of social and economic mobility — in contrast, that is, to the other types we shall consider. Being the most well-to-do of African peasantries, cash-croppers tend to have greater access to Western-type education and to the new statuses which the latter confers to successful individuals in this sphere. The absence of a numerous settler population has enabled (and necessitated) the movement of a considerable number of educated Africans into the clerical and middle-range job slots within the colonial and trading company bureaucracies.

The educated also often compete successfully in the status and political hierarchy with the traditional chiefs and wealthy landholders — though the chiefs increasingly send their sons off to be educated and are themselves frequently owners of large estates. Mobility in the economic sphere is related to the new opportunities in trade, land speculation, and the widening range of occupations made available through education and the new skills required by their involvement in commercial agriculture and the exchange economy. A correlate of this economic mobility, then, is a relatively high degree of economic diversity, which is a characteristic feature of the crop-commercialized rural aggregate.

Due to the attraction of profitable cash-cropping for peasants of less well-endowed areas, resulting in a relatively large influx of immigrant labor, and the prospects of lucrative profits in trade, money lending and processing industries associated with the cash-crop in question (e.g. cotton-ginning in Buganda) for ethnic minorities, the crop-commercialized rural aggregates are usually ethnically and racially heterogeneous (cf. Richards 1952). In most such cases, the predominance of an ethnic minority in the sphere of petty-bourgeois economic enterprises gives rise to hostility among the peasant producers towards the latter, which in some instances has led to open violence (e.g. in the Gold Coast in 1948, and the Uganda riots of 1949). The immigrant laborers from poorer areas, on the other hand, are often considered as socially and/or ethnically inferior by the peasants native to the area.

The economic role of women in primary production in many of these crop-commercialized peasantries has tended to decline. Men usually take over many production operations in the cultivation of cash-crops and control the cash realized from the sale of their product. In areas where women tradi-

tionally carried out the bulk of the agricultural labor, with men performing only the heavy tasks, the transition to commercial agriculture has often meant a sharp decline in the woman's contribution to the household economy and hence a resultant decline in her status and independence. On the other hand, in some areas, such as the cocoa growing regions of Nigeria and Ghana, the increased and very active role of women in trade has often more than offset their declining role in agricultural production, and resulted in an increase in their range of activities and independence. Linked to this shift in the traditional division of labor, and the growing need of hired labor, there has, in some instances been an increase in the desirability, if not the incidence, of polygamy — the wives in this case being looked upon as an increment to the husbands' labor force, particularly in the sphere of subsistence crops. Related to the increased role of men in cash-crop production, one finds in many traditionally matrilineal societies a strengthening of father-son ties and a weakening of ties between a man and his sister's sons. Strong pressures have been exerted in these peasant communities (e.g. as among the Ashanti of Ghana) to shift from a matrilineal to a patrilineal system of inheritance, and the old rules, while still in effect, are often circumvented through gifts and the use of individual wills in which a man leaves much of his personal property to his sons.

The territories in which this type of African peasantry is found are characterized, as previously noted, by an absence of European settlers and a relatively small number of European plantations and mines. While this has enabled the peasants of these regions to retain their lands and enter the market economy as cash-crop producers, it has also placed them — to the extent that they are dependent on the sale of a single export cash-crop for much of their consumption needs — in a very vulnerable position with respect to the series of middlemen who drain off much of the profit garnered by their product on the world market and to the virtually all-powerful trading companies. The latter companies, such as the British-Dutch Unilever organizations and the French firm *Société Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain* in West Africa, have established buying and selling monopolies and set the prices for both the peasants' cash crops and the imported goods which they have come to need. The practice of these companies is to buy cheap and sell dear, and this fact has greatly depressed peasant earnings from export crops and has exerted a strong pressure on these cash-cropping peasantries to organize on a non-local basis to defend their mu-

tual economic interests. Not only have organized boycotts of over-priced imported goods occurred (e.g. among the cocoa producers of Nigeria and the Gold Coast), but permanent organizations have been formed in almost every area of crop-commercialized peasantries for the purpose of marketing crops collectively, granting credit on reasonable terms and holding back products for a fair price (Hunton 1960:36-7).

Many of these cooperative organizations were superimposed by the colonial governments — particularly in the French colonies and the Congo — and the majority were formed for limited economic purposes such as marketing, credit and sometimes for the provision of consumer goods. Notably absent among crop-commercialized rural aggregates is the growth of cooperative forms of labor in the sphere of agricultural production. As is perhaps the case with all peasant-owners, strong ties between the individual and his small land-holding mitigate against his yielding any prerogatives or rights with respect to "his" land to a larger collective association of producers. Nevertheless, the marketing and other types of cooperative formed among crop-commercialized peasants — which have come into existence in the majority of cases due to the needs and recognized mutual economic interests of the peasants involved — have effectively linked these peasants in non-local and frequently non-ethnic and non-tribal associations. As pointed out in the above cited U.N. publication, the structure of the cooperative association:

...extending from the smallest economic and social units to national organizations, provides an important means through which the relatively isolated efforts of individuals or groups become integrated with wider economic processes and with the general policies of economic and social development. Cooperative organizations provide a channel through which traditional usages of self-help and mutual aid may obtain a new expression and broader application (U.N. 1958:138-9).

Lastly, the absence of European settlers in significantly large numbers, together with the effective role of mission-controlled education in upward economic and social mobility, has resulted in a relatively high incidence of Christianization and the assimilation of more-or-less *Orthodox* Catholic, Protestant and Muslim beliefs and religious structures.

In those African colonies where cash-cropping peasantries

have predominated, a number of the characteristics indicated above combined to produce a condition of *relatively low revolutionary potential*. The general absence of European settlers, together with the numerous ramifications associated with this fact, has clearly been of paramount importance in this regard. Capitalist exploitation by the great trading companies, while quite effective in shaping and skimming off the surpluses of peasant production, did not necessitate the large-scale expropriation and alienation of African land — a phenomenon which everywhere underlay the sharpest and most bitter of African peasant grievances. The individuation of tenure and the "commodification" of land and labor, which developed along with the growing importance of one or two export crops, yielded a relatively stratified rural aggregate with marked class differences even among the peasantry. This factor, plus the availability of avenues of upward mobility for the educated and ambitious, tended to divide the rural population into strata and sectors with conflicting sets of interests vis-a-vis the dominant colonial regime and its practices. Effective unity in the face of a common colonizing enemy was, under these circumstances, obviously difficult to achieve.

Additional causally linked factors underlying this low revolutionary potential among cash-cropping peasantries — e.g. ethnic heterogeneity, religious orthodoxy, relative material well-being, etc. — will be thrown into sharper relief when we next consider labor exporting peasantries. At present it can be noted that, despite numerous instances of early violent encounters with European colonizers, those areas in which there developed a predominantly cash-cropping peasantry (e.g. Uganda, Gold Coast, Nigeria, French West Africa) reveal a notably low incidence of sustained revolutionary struggles against the rule and/or practices of the colonizing powers.

2. LABOR-EXPORTING PEASANTRY

This type of peasantry is (a) found most frequently in the highland and savannah regions of East and South Africa, (b) engaged in subsistence cultivation, usually combined with animal husbandry, and large-scale migrant wage employment, (c) generally located unfavorably with respect to transportation facilities and market centers and (d) settled densely in restricted areas in territories with significant European rural settlement and/or extractive industries. Perhaps the most extreme development of this peasant type occurred in the Union of South Africa, Swaziland, Angola, Mozambique, the Rhodesias, Kenya and Algeria.

The external variable with the widest and most determining ramifications for peasant aggregates in these areas is the presence of European settlement and industry. European agricultural and mineral enterprises in these territories required the appropriation of African lands; and the acquisition of a further necessary resource, cheap African labor, required the appropriation of more African lands. In addition, then, to various other forms of compulsory labor, ranging from outright conscription and vagrancy laws (as practiced today in Angola and Mozambique) to the more subtle imposition of cash taxes, the creation of an artificial land shortage among African peasants was perhaps the surest and most effective way to guarantee a continuous flow of cheap African labor into the centers of European enterprise.

What Kuper has said of Swaziland, where Europeans controlled 49% of the land, is true of all the above mentioned territories: "The impact of imperialism, characterized by the demand for land, markets and cheap labor, was severe on the Swazi peasants" (1947).

Confined to a "reserve" of one form or another, the peasant is confronted with an insufficiency of land for the profitable pursuit of his traditional methods of shifting cultivation and pasturage, an insufficiency of capital and technical training to turn to a more advantageous form of agriculture or animal husbandry, and a resulting insufficiency of produce to feed his family and exchange for the cash required to pay his taxes and make the necessary purchases of imported goods. It is this condition which necessitates the outward flow of male, and to a lesser extent female, labor from the peasant communities into the European industrial centers. Low wages, short term contracts and other devices calculatedly prevent the vast majority of



Where no man lives, wives, mothers and children
live in conditions such as these...

...while the men sell their labor.



Africans from taking up permanent residence with their families in their place of employment, forcing them to leave wives and children at home and return to the reserves themselves after relatively short and intermittent periods of wage employment. This has resulted in what Wilson so vividly described as the "hungry, manless areas" of Africa in which peasants buy "clothes with hunger" (1941-2).

In these peasant communities anywhere from 20% to 80% of the able-bodied males are absent from the labor force. This further reduces a level of agricultural production already too low — due to population pressure, overstocking and soil erosion — to feed its inhabitants. In Swaziland "the food-stuffs grown by Natives" in 1933 was "only about one-fifth of their requirement, the remaining four-fifths being supplied by European farmers and by traders who import grain from the Union" (Colonial Office, 1933:17). As Houghton bluntly comments in his study of a South African reserve, "Living in dire poverty, the majority of people would starve were it not for the income received from those men and women in the family who go out to work in the cities" (1952:168). Family budgets in this study showed that 85% of their incomes came from cash earning. A circular and cumulative process is thus established in which the outflow of male labor results in a deterioration of cultivation practices, a declining rate of productivity, and an increasing pressure on the population to seek outside employment. Wage earners do not, as noted in a U.N. report, "set out with a view of amassing capital, but in order to meet the recurrent monetary obligations and consumption needs of the household" (U.N. 1958:129).

In addition to the extreme poverty characteristic of these peasant aggregates, the population residing within the community at any one time is very unbalanced, with an abnormally high percentage of women, children and aged. In the study referred to above (Houghton 1952:131), it was calculated that 64.4% or nearly two-thirds of the population were of pre-working and retirement ages, and that 53.9% of the males of working age (i.e. 16 to 60) were absent from the District at the time of the census. These figures are not untypical, and the profound effects on the family and social life of the peasant communities has been noted by virtually every investigator of the "manless" areas of Africa. As Kuper says, "Family life cannot stand up to the attack of poverty on the one hand, and the absence of menfolk on the other" (1947:151). The preponderance of women over men has led to an increasingly high incidence of "adultery and... pleas for divorce on grounds of desertion" (Barnes 1951:20),

and to the growing number of illegitimate children. Houghton calculated that "one child in every four is illegitimate and that approximately every other family is without a male head" (1952:111).

Other features of family life frequently noted include the decay of parental authority and discipline; the enhanced status and independence of the young wage earners upon whom the older men are dependent for money to pay taxes and meet other needs (Schapera 1937:381); the decline in polygamy and the commercialization of bride-price transactions; an increase in the number of unmarried women and the incidence of concubines and pre-marital sex relations, the emergence of a cultural gap between "urbanized" males and their more rural, traditionally oriented wives; increased economic and domestic responsibilities of married women and a growing number of nuclear families comprised of mother and children; and the diminution in significance of kin-based mutual aid in work and the sharing of wealth.

In the peasant community as a whole there is often a high degree of residential mobility, with wives moving in with their parents while the husband is away and returning, often to a new site, upon his return, and with children moving frequently between the homes of parents and kinsmen. At the same time, economic and social mobility is significantly less than that found in the crop-commercialized rural aggregates. Access to higher education and the more remunerative clerical, semi-skilled and skilled jobs is severely restricted, and the position of chiefs has been strongly supported by colonial and white minority governments against the social and political inroads of the educated few who return to the reserves. Nevertheless, given the socially ambivalent position of the chiefs and headmen — attempting to represent the conflicting interests of both their impoverished people and the colonial government — their position and prestige within the social structure of the rural aggregates is tending in most areas to decline at an accelerated pace.

While there is a wide range of land tenure systems found among peasantries of this type, ranging from the government imposed systems of freehold, quitrent and "communal" holdings in the reserves of South Africa to various adaptations of traditional systems, there has been a marked resistance among most of these peasants to the various schemes of individual tenure advanced by European governments. The general absence of cash-crops and the persistence of traditional methods of cultivation and animal husbandry on deteriorated

and overcrowded lands has, in most cases, led to an extreme fragmentation which gives a "sameness" to these areas despite differences in the "legal" forms of tenure. This process has reached its greatest extreme in South Africa where, in spite of the existence of freehold and quitrent tenure in some of the reserves, and restrictions to the contrary, "with all types of tenure there is a tendency toward greater and greater subdivision of holdings" (Houghton 1952:129). With the object of providing some but not enough land to every African, the South African Government has actively supported land policies leading toward fragmentation. African peasants can acquire land holdings with a relative degree of security of tenure on only 11% of the total land area and "the whole weight of white authority has been directed towards subdividing and further subdividing land already occupied by Africans and establishing as many people on it as possible; for thus is segregation thought to be achieved and the obligation of employers to pay a wage on which a family can live, and of the whole community to provide for the old, the sick, and the unemployed, avoided" (ibid.:136).

In comparison to the crop-commercialized peasantries, these "manless" or "labor-commercialized" peasantries exhibit, in the face of the "levelling" processes at work, a *relative homogeneity and lack of rigidly defined economic and social strata*. While in traditionally hierarchical societies, "the economic pressure affects the poorer commoner more than the established aristocracy" (Kuper 1947:18), and a certain amount of economic differentiation exists in areas of freehold tenure, the general and pervasive poverty of these areas and the absence of economic opportunities in the field of commercial crops has prevented the emergence of a significant landlord or monied class. In some of these territories, however, and particularly in South Africa, there exists a growing number of landless peasants whose position is somewhat worse than that of the holders of half- or one-acre plots.

Along with this economic homogeneity, there also tends to be a high degree of tribal and ethnic homogeneity in these labor-exporting rural aggregates. Except for a few traders, missionaries and government officials there is little in these areas to attract "foreigners" from other tribal areas and most colonial and white minority governments have, for obvious reasons, pursued a policy of isolating from one another the various tribal and ethnic units in the territory.

Being drawn into the cash economy largely through the export of wage labor rather than through the production and sale of cash crops, there has been little or no development of the marketing and credit cooperatives characteristic of the crop-commercialized rural aggregates. On the other hand, the migrant labor system has drawn many African peasants into urban industrial associations in which they participate with men of other tribes and areas. Thus, while rural conditions mitigate against the formation of non-local agricultural associations linking peasant producers and communities, they facilitate — by making necessary the export of large numbers of migrant workers — the development of links between the various peasant communities through the growing urban industrial movements to which they mutually contribute members.

The migrant worker, being a member *both* of his peasant community and an urban association, is a link between these rural and urban groups as well as between his rural community and the various other peasant communities which likewise contribute workers to the urban association. The cyclical participation of the migrant worker in both the rural and urban "worlds" tends to weaken his loyalties to the tribe and tribal authorities and, at the same time, to foster new loyalties to larger African groupings in their opposition to foreign rule and oppression. Thus Kuper noted regarding Swaziland that: "Through urbanization Swazi are developing a Bantu as opposed to a Swazi consciousness — a new nationalism in relation to which the old nationalism can be labeled tribalism" (1947:22). And this tendency has continued to grow in more recent years.

The intensified conflict between black and white in areas of significant European settlement together with several of the other characteristics mentioned above, have given rise to a tendency toward syncretic religious movements and churches. The independent and unorthodox church and sect provide an outlet for the expression of frustrations and grievances not permitted to flow into open political channels.

In contrast to the cash-cropping peasantries, a number of the characteristics mentioned above have combined to produce among labor-exporting peasantries a *relatively high revolutionary potential*. European settlement, the alienation of African lands, coercive techniques of obtaining and maintaining the flow of cheap African labor, low and deteriorating material conditions of life, relative absence of avenues for upward mobility, general socio-economic homogeneity (lack of

significant stratification), breakdown and malaise in family life, the cross-linking of peasant communities through urban associations (trade unions, etc.), growth of a national as distinct from a tribal consciousness: these and other causally linked factors, exacerbated by generally more intense forms of European racial discrimination and degradation (color-bar, etc.) and the growth of a training-ground for militancy and independence within the syncretic church movements, have facilitated the organizational and ideological unification of labor-exporting peasantries against the presence and practices of colonial and white minority European regimes. And this tendency is even more marked within populations with traditionally egalitarian political systems.

Major contemporary revolutions in Africa have occurred almost exclusively in colonies and territories ruled by white minority regimes where significant European settlement and the ramifications therefrom have produced a predominance of labor-exporting peasantries. Thus, for example: the revolutions in Kenya (1952-56), Algeria (1954-62), Angola (1961-), Mozambique (1964-), Rhodesia (1967-), South Africa (1960-), and South West Africa (1966-). And though these areas also contain cash-cropping and marginal-subsistence peasantries, it is clear that in most cases it has been (and continued to be) the labor-exporting peasantries (e.g. the Kikuyu in Kenya, Kabyles in Algeria, Pondo in South Africa, Ovambo in South West Africa, Luena, Chokwe and Umbundu in Angola, etc.) which have played the leading and most significant role within the rural population in these revolutionary struggles.

3. MARGINAL-SUBSISTENCE PEASANTRY

This type of peasantry is (a) most characteristic of the northern savannah regions of moderate rainfall but is widespread in other areas of Africa as well, (b) engaged in subsistence cultivation of annual crops plus production for exchange sufficient to pay taxes and make necessary purchases, (c) unfavorably located with respect to transportation facilities and urban market centers and (d) relatively sparsely settled in territories with little or no European settlement and/or a very restricted wage-labor market.

Peasant aggregates of this type exhibit a great deal of variation from one region to another and could, perhaps, be broken down into several major types. Nevertheless, they are confronted with a number of similar external and ecological factors which have resulted in their developing along quite similar lines and manifesting a number of common economic and structural features.

In contrast to the two types of peasantry previously considered, this type is characterized by its relatively marginal involvement in the modern processes of commercialization. Often occupying lands of only moderate soil fertility outside the perennial crop zone or located in areas remote from rail or road transport and urban centers, these peasant communities are largely engaged in subsistence cultivation combined with a component of cash economy sufficient at best to take care of their tax burdens and purchase the minimal necessary trade and/or consumption items. While sometimes engaged in the sale of small quantities of household craft goods or the collected fruits of indigenous trees, the vast majority of these peasants sell the surplus of their subsistence crops in the internal markets and/or cultivate small plots of cash-crops which they sell to traders for export. In any case, they produce most if not all of the foodstuffs traditionally required for their consumption needs.

Related to the generally sparse population and poor plantation crop potential of these areas, there has been little to attract European settlement and agricultural enterprise. As Thompson noted concerning French West Africa: "In general, the poverty of French West Africa's soils, the shortage of local labor, and the large amounts of capital required to develop big plantations automatically curtailed the number of European requests for sizable land grants" (1957:347).

The general absence of European settlement and industry in these areas has resulted in both a low demand for African wage-labor and a sufficiency of land for the pursuance of traditional agricultural methods by African peasants. While government recruitment or conscription for public works and the establishment of forest and animal reserves have, in some cases, excessively tapped African resources of land and labor, there has not developed in these areas the extreme pressure on the land characteristic of the European-settled territories of East and southern Africa.

Carrying on largely within the framework of traditional patterns of shifting cultivation, these marginal-subsistence peasants are neither as economically well-off as the crop-commercialized peasantries nor as impoverished as the labor-commercialized peasants — they are generally poor, but not starving. With regard to the Hausa of Northern Nigeria, Forde noted that "The data on production and the returns on crops, craft activity and labor suggest that the incomes available to the ordinary rural household have been barely sufficient in a year of reasonably good crops to support the native norms of consumption, which are themselves very modest, and, so far as food is concerned, are probably physiologically inadequate" (1945:163). This same statement, with little modification, could be made of the vast majority of peasants of this type.

In the absence of impelling pressures to change, these marginal-subsistence peasantries have retained their traditional systems of land tenure. Land has not taken on the qualities of a commodity and all adult members of the community are entitled to its use and products up to their capacity to employ it productively. Unutilized lands revert to the community and are allotted by lineage head, headman or village chief to members of the community as their need requires. While in some cases they are tending to decline, traditional forms of labor exchange and mutual aid in agricultural tasks persist, as does the corporate character of the village or community. In French West Africa, as in many other areas, the colonial government made attempts to initiate freehold tenure but, as Thompson points out, "Despite frequent exhortations and propaganda, few Africans have cared to individualize property. By 1950 only 1,742 Africans in the Federation had registered title to a total of 28,000 hectares" (1957:350). And most of this has been in and around the larger urban and marketing centers.

Where the traditional political systems were hierarchical,

as in the "feudal" regions of the northern savannahs and the areas of traditional African kingdoms, peasants often continue to pay some form of tax or labor tribute to the traditional rulers and there exists varying degrees of economic and social stratification within the rural aggregate. In northern Nigeria, as with many of the old French West African territories and northern Ghana, "...most of the rights in land, which had been previously acquired by ruling families and lesser members of the aristocracy, continued to be recognized," and though "they commonly affect but a small proportion of the total territory, the existence of landed estates, formerly worked by slaves and now farmed by *metayage* and wage labor, introduce an element... very different in scale and character from the dominant system of the autonomous household" (Forde 1945:120).

In the peasant villages or communities themselves, however, there exists little economic differentiation or social stratification based on considerations of wealth. Few avenues to economic advancement or significant capital accumulation are available to the peasants who, with the exception of the occasional individual who succeeds as a trader or merchant, are confronted with an almost complete absence of alternatives to the customary subsistence agriculture. With educational facilities absent or minimal and non-agricultural job opportunities few, the sons of marginal-subsistence peasants have little choice but to follow the long established agricultural practices of their fathers.

The marginal-subsistence peasantries, linked to the cash economy through trade in the internal markets or small-scale sales of export cash-crops to traders, "brokers" and agents of the few European merchant firms or companies, tend to exhibit little enthusiasm toward the formation of non-local producer and/or marketing societies. Where peasant indebtedness to traders and brokers has provided an economic motive for peasant cooperatives, or the colonial governments have attempted to superimpose them, they have often been opposed by the chiefs as a threat to their authority or by the peasants as a threat to their security of tenure and provincial isolation. Market, consumer and credit societies seem to be a natural outgrowth of the small freeholding crop-commercialized peasantries, appealing more to individual self-interest than to the communal interests manifested in traditional systems of cooperative labor and mutual aid among kinsmen and neighbors. Hailey has noted in this regard that:

...in the traditional organization there is a spirit of solidarity combined with a sense of reciprocity of rights and duties. But the appeal made by the co-operative movement is not primarily directed to the spirit of communal solidarity; its appeal is to the spirit of self-help and the intelligent furtherance of individual interests. Its success lies in the measure to which it can convince the individual that his own interests can best be secured by a disciplined association with others who seek a similar objective (1956:1459).

Outside of the administrative or traditional tribal structure, then, there appear to be few links between the relatively isolated village communities within this type of rural aggregate.

On the whole, marginal-subsistence peasantries have been less successfully penetrated by Christianity than either of the other two types we have considered. Religious beliefs and practices, therefore, have tended to remain largely traditional, with a very low incidence of either syncretic or orthodox Christian movements. Islam, however, has met with greater success.

As regards the *revolutionary potential* of marginal-subsistence peasantries, many of the characteristics mentioned above combined to make it *relatively low in contrast to both cash-cropping and labor-exporting peasantries*. In the absence, among other things, of both cross-linking associations (marketing cooperatives, trade unions, etc.) and the impact normally associated with the export of labor to urban industrial centers, there has developed very little in the way of "national" sentiments or consciousness. Where resistance to colonial rule or practices has occurred, it has generally been highly parochial or narrowly tribal in character — both ideologically and organizationally. With respect to the ongoing revolutions in southern Africa, enclaves of marginal-subsistence peasants are likely to become actively involved (on one side or the other) only when the struggle has physically penetrated their area and left them no other alternative.



CONCLUSION

We have discussed in this paper three of the major types of African peasantry. While there may be several others, there *is* one further type which I feel obliged, because of its relatively wide distribution in the north of Africa, to say at least a few words about. In North Africa there exists the freeholding Muslim peasantry, practicing irrigation agriculture in the very densely populated flood-plain areas. Perhaps the best example of this type of peasant aggregate is the Egyptian *fellaheen*, occupying the flood-plains of the Nile River. Prior to the agrarian reforms which began in 1952, Egyptian agriculture was "...characterized by a developed system of irrigation; a backward technique; dependence on cotton; and very unequal distribution of property accompanied by very small-scale tenure and farming" (Issawi 1947:59). Landlordism and extreme rural indebtedness characterized a rural scene in which less than half of the *fellahs* owning land could live on its produce, having to supplement their earnings by wage labor on the large estates, and in which there were 200,000 tenants and a large number of landless male laborers. Poverty is normally extreme among this type of peasantry, as is the peasant's tie to "his" land and the characteristic isolation and traditionalism of the peasant village. This type of peasantry is also very widespread in Asia and Latin America, and probably represents an end product in the development of freeholding peasants in the non-industrialized regions of the colonial world.

With respect to each of the three peasant types considered in this paper, I have attempted to depict or characterize the most developed or extreme form of its appearance in Africa. The first two types discussed, the cash-cropping and labor-exporting peasantries, are considered the most developed forms of two distinct lines of evolving peasantries in Africa. The third type, the subsistence peasantry marginally involved in the cash economy, is perhaps better thought of as an extreme of the "underdeveloped" African peasantries. All three types, of course, have many subtypes or transitional forms.

A change in any one of the conditional variables might radically affect the structure of a given rural aggregate and its relation to the larger society. Thus, with the third type, for example, the importance of cash-crops for local consumption increases, other things being equal, with the

proximity of the peasant community to urban or market centers, until, in the vicinity of large towns, shifting cultivation tends to give way to more intensive forms of cultivation, population densities increase and there is pressure towards individual forms of tenure. Thus Forde has observed concerning Northern Nigeria that "...in the immediate vicinity of the large towns, particularly those on the railway which are marketing centers for export products, not only is the ratio of exchange production still higher, but it is still more markedly directed to local consumption as opposed to export to distant areas" (1945:151). Again, where population pressures tend to build up in remote areas of relatively poor soil, a process of seasonal labor migration is initiated which sees the men migrating great distances for wage employment during the long (up to 8 months) dry season, and engaging very minimally at home in production for exchange in the local markets.

In areas of large European extractive industry but not a great deal of European settlement (i.e. Northern Rhodesia), proximity to urban centers has enabled peasant producers to sell off the surpluses of food products and resist, until population pressure becomes intense, the need to export labor for cash requirements (e.g. the Tonga: see Colson 1951: 95-161). Or where, as in the case of the Mambwe, the export of labor is combined with an absence of population pressure so that "...the money economy has not disrupted Mambwe subsistence production,...(and their)...participation in industry has not led to a breakdown in tribal life." But, as Watson has pointed out, "...population is increasing, and pressure on the available land is constantly growing. Some of the younger Mambwe already discuss the need to acquire land by purchase...(and while), owing to the lack of specialization in the work of men and women, the absence of large numbers of men has not meant less food for those left at home,...there is a limit to this disproportion" (1958:224-5).

Examples of these transitional or sub-types could be multiplied almost indefinitely, but enough has been said to indicate some of the more important lines of change among African peasantries in the colonial period, the conditional variables which in their various clusters have tended to place a given peasantry on one or another of three developmental paths, and some of the material factors which have determined the relative (and manifest) degree of revolutionary potential found among cash-cropping, labor-exporting and marginal subsistence peasantries respectively.

APPENDIX

PRINCIPAL PRODUCING AREAS OF
COCOA, COFFEE, COTTON AND GROUND-NUTS

<i>Crop, territory, period</i>	<i>area thou. hec.</i>	<i>Producing regions</i>
<i>COCOA:</i>		
Fr. W. Af., 1947-50	119	Mainly Ivory Coast
Ghana, 1950	728	Mainly Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti
Nigeria, 1950/51	242	Mainly Ibadan and Ife-Ilesha div. of Oyo; Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta Provinces and parts of the Colony
<i>COFFEE:</i>		
Belgian Congo, 1947-50	5	Mainly Kasai and Oriental
Fr. Eq. Af., 1948-50	15	Mainly Ubangi-Shari
Fr. W. Af., 1947-50	186	Mainly Ivory Coast
Tanganyika, 1952	36	Mainly Moshi district in Northern Province and Bukoba in Lake Province
Uganda, 1948-50	69	Mainly Mengo, Masaka and Mubende district in Buganda, and Bugishu in Eastern Prov.
<i>COTTON:</i>		
Belgian Congo, 1947-50	314	Mainly Oriental; but also in most other provinces
Fr. Eq. Af., 1948-50	280	Mainly Ubangi-Shari and Chad
Fr. W. Af., 1947-50	276	Upper Volta, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Niger and Sudan
Nigeria, 1950-51	377	Mainly northern territories (Zaria, Katsina and Sokoto)
Sudan, 1948-51	185	The Gezira
Tanganyika, 1952	87	Mainly Lake Province
Uganda, 1948-50	631	All parts of Uganda
<i>GROUND-NUTS:</i>		
Congo, 1947-50	217	All provinces
Fr. Eq. Af., 1948-50	155	Mainly Ubangi-Shari; also Chad, Middle Congo and Gabon
Fr. W. Af., 1947-50	1,211	Mainly Senegal, Sudan, Upper Volta, Niger
Nigeria, 1950-51	412	Mainly northern territories (Kano, Sokoto, Katsina and Bornu)
Tanganyika, 1952	81	Lake and Western Provinces

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