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GLOBAL RESTRUCTURING AND LAND RIGHTS
IN GHANA

Forest Food Chains, Timber and Rural Livelihoods

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Plans are underway to develop the Shai Hills into a first class tourist centre. The Development of the Shai Hills tourism potential has become necessary in view of the interest expressed so far by a number of foreign investors. *Daily Graphic*, Tuesday 6 January 1998, p.13

Though Ghana produces some of the finest hardwoods in the world for flooring, furniture and fitments and a wide range of utility timbers, they are generally exported to people and countries who realise their value and are relatively little used in their country of origin. A. Foggie and B. Piasecki, 1962, "Timber, Fuel and Minor Produce" in J.B. Wills (ed.) *Agriculture and Land Use in Ghana*, p. 238.

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Kojo Sebastian Amanor

Introduction

In recent years, the land question in Africa has become the focus of fresh debate on the content and direction of socioeconomic change on the continent. The introduction of structural adjustment, the rolling back of the state, the decentralisation of the governmental system, the emergence of new agendas of community development relating to people-centred development and popular participation, the growth of NGOs, and the creation of a new role for the institutions of civil society, have all resulted in a call for new land reform programmes that are consonant with these developments.

Old-style land reform emerged in the era when modernisation theory was dominant. The dominant social institutions in the rural areas were seen as backward. They were seen as acting as a brake on the efforts of aspiring and ambitious farmers. Land reform called for the introduction of formal land titling programmes that would give farmers security in land and enable them to use land as collateral for loans from banks for investment in modern agricultural technology. Old-style land reform addressed the need to replace allegedly outmoded land tenure forms, such as sharecropping, with fixed monetary land rental forms.

A more radical form of old-style land reform called for the state to nationalise land and appoint allocative authorities to administer these lands. Land reform was seen as necessary to strengthen security of tenure, abolish private landlordism, equalise conditions of land allocation, reduce litigation, etc. Land should be allocated according to criteria that would permit optimum holding sizes for agriculture and durable conditions of tenure. To prevent abuse by civil servants, the allocative authority could consist of representatives of local and district communities, including the chiefs. However, since the landlord class often has considerable influence in government, it is unrealistic to expect a policy of radical land reform to be easily implemented outside revolutionary conditions and it becomes practical to fall back on a regulatory reform programme to ensure that the terms of tenure are secure (Arhin, 1985). The problems with introducing radical land reform into existing social formations lie with the entrenched political interests of the ruling elite and their allies (de Janvry, 1981).

In recent years, a new perspective on land reform has gained ground. This argues that traditional land tenure regimes should be retained in some form or other, since they embody important principles concerned with equity and social redistribution and the maintenance of ecological balance.

They are also dynamic and exhibit the capacity to evolve and adapt to changing conditions. This position is comprehensively stated by Field-Juma (1996:17–18):

Indigenous resource management systems reflected the way communities organised their lives within the constraints of the environment in which they lived. Decision-making institutions focused on utilising and managing environmental resources based on the knowledge of the community. This was done within the framework of their world view, in other words in accordance with their ethics, norms and beliefs ... Resource use systems relied upon building reciprocal relations among families and communities, for example through livestock sharing, and with other groups and communities through trade, marriage and advisers. These relations redistributed risk and strengthened social obligation to be utilised during times of drought, pestilence or war ... Indigenous natural resource systems were rarely static, and showed a notable degree of change over time in response to social and economic changes, new technologies, natural calamities, migration and population change, subordination and war. It has been observed that over time customary tenure systems in Africa have spontaneously evolved “from more diffuse and collective to more specific and exclusionary individual rights” in response to population pressure and commercialisation of agriculture.

Similarly, Okoth-Ogendo (1994: 23–4) has argued:

In former days, indigenous land use communities recognised the harshness of the environment and sought to cope with it through a number of institutional structures, principles and techniques. Over time these communities also devised ways of addressing the population issue, especially as it approached critical dimensions in particular localities. The most important institutional structure through which communities ensured proper management of agricultural land resources was land tenure. Tenure regimes, it will be recalled, define the manner in which land resources may be obtained and the conditions subject to which they may be used. African tenure regimes did this by distinguishing clearly between rights of access to these resources and the loci of power of control over their use ... The purpose of vesting the control function in the political authority of the community—the head of the family, the common ancestor or a council of elders—was generally three-fold. First and foremost, it was meant to guarantee security of opportunity for all who had access rights to those resources. If there were a possibility that some of these rights would be taken away, the tenure system assured that these would occur only in exceptional circumstances, and only upon a collective decision made at the highest level of social organisation. Second, it was designed to ensure equity between and across generations. Thus the control function determined the rate of expansion or contraction of membership in the unit by means other than birth, and the distribution or redistribution of access rights in response, *inter alia*, to increased demand for land. Third, the control function also determined important land use decisions, such as specific land usages in particular areas of community territory, including planting, weeding and harvesting times, the duration of fallow periods, and the nature of resource preservation or conservation measures, where these required collective action by the community.

These approaches are rooted in conceptions of environmental governance and local-level development. They have developed in reaction to the concept of *the tragedy of the commons* (Hardin, 1968) and argue for the vitality of community land use. They argue that customary land management was concerned with forms of sustainable land management that drew from a broad knowledge base of the environment. These land management systems have been undermined by centralised control of land administration, which emphasises individual land titling and private property rather than ecological stewardship. This results in a situation of conflict between the few within local communities who use modern agrarian reform legislation to appropriate community resources through individual land titlings and the majority of the community who still regard land as community property. While customary forms of land management are undermined through their lack of recognition by the national land administration and a lack of a juridical framework for asserting the “indigenous perspective”, national instruments and reforms for land administration have not been incorporated into the social, cultural and economic milieu of the land users. Thus, new forms of administration need to be developed that create a better interface and integration between customary land forms and state institutions for land management.

An important factor that has influenced this emerging of an emphasis on indigenous land tenure has been widespread abuse by state organs of land reform. Governments have used powers over land administration to appropriate land for members of the political elite for the development of modern large-scale agriculture and land speculation. In Ghana, Kasanga (1996: 100) has argued that the land machinery has operated only in the interests of a select minority and has been “inequitable, unjust, callous, inefficient, wasteful and hopelessly corrupt”. The institutions for land management at the district level are weak. In contrast with this he contends, the principal tenets of customary land tenure are progressive and have successfully defined the sustainable management of land over the generations and contain checks and balances to control abuse of authority by chiefs. He advocates policies that promote the active involvement of traditional community political structures in land management and the development of a community land secretariat.

In these studies, the positive attributes of traditional land tenure systems—the equity, social distribution characteristics and the checks and balances within the system—tend to be asserted as ideal principles rather than shown to operate in practice through empirical data or case studies. As a policy instrument, there is a danger that this assertion of a democratic principle of traditional land administration may serve the interests of the rural ruling class and may serve as a means of ideologically justifying their demand for the state to leave rural land administration to traditional rulers.

Many of the arguments for incorporating indigenous land management institutions and land authorities into national land administration are couched in terms of environmental governance, popular participation and preservation of the vitality of cultural forms and local knowledge systems. Many of these studies refer to the specifics and peculiarity of African social formations. However, as will become evident in the next section, many of these arguments originate from and have been drawn from theoretical debates in development economics about the role of land reform in promoting agricultural modernisation.

In particular, they derive from a central paradox that has emerged in the context of introducing land reform into structural adjustment frameworks—while land reform has been promoted as a means of smoothing the operation of market forces in agriculture, land reform involves the intervention of a state, which, according to the tenets of neo-classical liberalisation theory, should be shrinking. The rationale for introducing land reform is promoting efficiency by reducing the transaction costs of a landlord economy. But by promoting land titling and cadastral surveys, the transaction costs of the state are increased. Thus, much of the recent economic literature on land reform is concerned with modes of land administration that will enable communities to absorb the transaction costs of institutional management. In this context, traditional land tenure systems have acquired new significance.

Land reform and agricultural modernisation

The land question first came to prominence in mainstream Western development theory in the early post-war period. Land reform was associated with the aim of stemming the red revolution by promoting the green revolution of technological innovation in the agricultural sector. Myrdal (1968; 1959) argued that industrialisation could not absorb the mass of underemployed and unemployed labour in the countryside and that promoting of an increasing efficiency in agricultural production was a precondition for the development of sustained growth. Land reform was a vital component of agrarian development which would bring about a more equitable distribution of land. A more equitable distribution of land would result in significant expansion of food production, since smallholder farmers exhibit higher productivity per area of land than landlords who gain their incomes from rents or from large farmers who may be unwilling to increase productivity because they suspect that this may lead to lower agricultural prices. Land reform was initially formulated in 1950s development theory as an institutional reform that would facilitate adoption of a package of modern

technologies, inputs, cultivation techniques and credit facilities to foster increased food production by small producers.

The historical peculiarities of the post-war period—the defeat of Japan and occupation of Japan, Taiwan and Korea by American forces, and the collusion of the large landlords with fascism and the Japanese occupation, has enabled radical land reform to be carried out in these countries. However, in other countries, such as Mexico, the Philippines and Malaysia it has floundered, and the political power of the landlord class has enabled it to derail land reform (Hayami *et al.*, 1990; de Janvry, 1981). Given the lack of power of small farmers, radical land reform for small cultivators has been supplanted by land reform for the benefit of large farmers.

Land reform in Africa has been considered a special case. The abundance of land in Africa has been regarded as a peculiarity that calls for a new approach to land reform. It has been argued that the lack of a land market in Africa prevents the emergence of private land rights and security in particular plots of land. This hinders the development of more efficient agriculture by preventing ambitious farmers from expanding their holdings, results in considerable expenditure of capital on land litigation and hampers the development of credit facilities for small farmers who could use land titling as collateral. Thus, the essence of land reform in the African setting is aimed at redefining the terms and conditions under which land is held and promoting the development of a land market that will facilitate the emergence of capital markets in land and credit markets for the adoption of new technologies (Harrison, 1987). The original arguments in favour of radical land reform in Asia—the efficiency of smallholder agriculture and the provision of an infrastructure to promote smallholder agriculture—have been replaced by another set of arguments—the need to create security of ownership to promote the interests of more ambitious or aspiring capitalist farmers and entrepreneurs willing to invest in agriculture.

In recent years, this perspective has been questioned and new approaches to the land question in Africa now stress the dynamic evolution of land rights and their responses to market forces. As land becomes increasingly scarce in response to population growth, it will acquire increasing economic value, and institutions will arise that restrict access to land and engender an active land market (Feder and Noronha 1987; Feeny, 1988). Carter and Zimmerman (1994) argue that land markets emerge as a consequence of the shift from economic relations embedded in customary kinship structures to the mediation of the market. This results in individualised and stratified production and risk-coping strategies that replace the social safety net functions of extended kin. In times of stress and underproduction of basic foodstuffs, the poor sell land to smooth consumption needs thereby creating a land market. Better endowed farmers purchase land to increase

their production and wealth. Thus, increasing market integration of rural producers creates endogenous pressures for the emergence of a land market.

The thesis that population pressures and agricultural commercialisation create pressures for private land rights has resulted in a debate over the need to introduce formal land registration and title by the state. Until the late 1980s, the dominant paradigm for land reform in Africa was concerned with the central role of the state in consolidating and formalising private land titling and security in land (World Bank, 1989; Harrison, 1987). Since then, land policy analysts have become more cautious and question the need for the state to interfere in processes that are being defined and managed at the local level (Mighot-Adholla *et al.*, 1991; Bruce, 1993; Bruce and Mighot-Adholla, 1994; Platteau, 1992; Okoth-Ogendo, 1993).

Mighot-Adholla *et al.* (1991) argue that African tenure systems and Western property rights systems should not be seen as opposites but points along a continuum from communal systems to individual land rights. Drawing on the results of surveys carried out in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, they conclude that tenure systems in Africa occupy different points along this continuum in relation to the degree of population pressure and commercialisation within their related agricultural systems. However, they found no relationship between variations in land rights and productivity and argue that the major constraints on land productivity include rural infrastructure, market efficiency, and availability of and information on new technologies. They argue that governments should focus on improving these facilities, which are the major constraints to agricultural productivity, rather than in developing costly land titling programmes. State land titling programmes should only arise in the advent of a demand for change from below and of increased commercial agricultural opportunities.

Similarly, Bruce (1993) has cautioned against developing costly land titling programmes and suggests that “community-based solutions” need to be explored. Platteau (1996) has also suggested that village systems are able to evolve to meet new needs. Regardless of social differentiation, African village communities provide important social security functions to their members and ensure that all can participate in new opportunities. In contrast with this, state intervention to promote individual land titlings may work against particular groups within the community that may have the use of land but no control over it, such as women. Platteau advocates an approach that seeks to reinstitutionalise indigenous land tenure systems and informal procedures in land administration.

A common thread running through these recent approaches to land reform in Africa is the concept of *transaction costs*. In the *new institutional economics*, it has been argued that neo-classical economic equilibrium theory has neglected the costs of transactions that are internalised in the organisation of

a firm, but which enable corporate firms (with economies of scale) to organise more efficiently in the market. Firms do not only carry out economic transactions, but also create an administrative and institutional framework to regulate and enhance these transactions and the flow of information that informs the transactions (North, 1990).

In recent years, development theory has become preoccupied with the problems of creating a favourable institutional framework and transparent regulatory conditions as part of a favourable climate for encouraging international investment in Africa. This concern has grown out of early structural adjustment programme directives roll back the state through divestiture and market liberalisation. In this process, it has been recognised that market mechanisms can only function efficiently when embedded in appropriate social institutions, including a generalised morality that promotes honesty in impersonal transactions and the general participation of institutions of civil society in the management of socioeconomic reform. Creating institutional frameworks for smooth market operation may involve considerable expenditure due to high transaction and information costs. Given these caveats, recent frameworks for economic restructuring are seeking modes of creating appropriate institutional links between the state and the market, and between the administrative functions of the state and the organisations of civil society. This approach is now being incorporated into structural adjustment programmes. It involves a greater devolution of administrative and social welfare functions to community organisations and attempts to achieve better integration between civil organisations and state functions.

As structural adjustment programmes moved from concerns with market liberalisation to appropriate institutional reforms, land tenure reform began to feature on the agenda. The major objective of land reform was to promote secure rights in property by creating a regulatory framework through land registration and title. However, by the early 1990s, concerns about the cost of land titling programmes and the ability of the state to supervise them transparently and honestly has resulted in growing caution about state-administered land reform. Hence, Bruce (1993:50) comments:

Tenure systems are part of larger political and economic systems, and tenure reform decisions are never dictated just by the facts of the case and development theory. Politics often plays a large and legitimate role, with politicians using tenure reforms to build constituencies, to undermine the opponents, and to realise their vision of a good society ... [S]tate leasehold is another form of individualisation of tenure, and where leaseholds are long enough, they potentially offer many of the same advantages as individual ownership. The experience with this system has, however, been seriously marred by abuse of the state's power of land allocation to allow bureaucratic and other elites to grab land.

Having established the lack of neutrality of the state in land administration and its propensity to siphon “economic rents”, Bruce (1993:50–1) argues that farmers’ interests in title to land may arise from concerns that “a title conferred by the state may be the best way to defend against reallocation of land by the state and its local representatives, whom they see as the major threat to their security of tenure”, rather than “from a desire to change agricultural practices and increase production”. Thus state-implemented land reform may result in high transaction costs that do not promote market transparency. They are not driven by popular demand and may distort the aims of producing institutional reforms that promote and regulate impersonal relations. Given this caveat, the state should rather facilitate the evolution of indigenous land tenure relations and community organisations that can administer land relations and absorb transaction costs. In this context, the emphasis on the capacity of indigenous land tenure systems to evolve into a land market in response to changing factors of production helps to justify the position that land reform must arise from endogenous demand, rooted in the transaction-cost-bearing institutions of civil society (i.e., that communities and land users must bear the costs of land administration).

This perspective on land tenure, which stresses the capacity of indigenous community development organisations to manage the administration of land, reflects the rise of new paradigms for development based on decentralised and participatory models, the importance of “indigenous knowledge”, and the rationality of strengthening local capacities to manage and implement development initiatives and programmes. In place of the aims of post-war modernisation to replace the “traditional” agricultural sector by a modern sector, this new approach seeks to create new modes of integrating rural communities engaged in peasant production into a modern agricultural service sector.

Recent efforts to redefine land tenure reform focus on creating a more flexible, pragmatic and adaptive policy environment. They attempt to integrate various agricultural sectors, strata and interests by developing different programmes of tenure reform to meet differing needs and perspectives. In place of land reform to meet the needs of smallholder farmers or breaking up “traditional” or “semi-feudal” land relationships in order to promote equity and efficiency, the major emphasis is now on promoting endogenous, transaction-cost-reducing rural institutions.

One variant of this approach advocates the development of a dual system of tenure rights, in which individual title coexists with group or collective title, as was the case in settler colonies. This approach has been developed by Platteau (1992:245):

A dual system of land rights would thereby come into existence. Private rights in land would coexist with communal rights and both sets of rights would be officially guaranteed. Moreover private land titlings would not be transferable (owing to the need to contain disequalising tendencies) whereas group titles would remain vested in the community concerned as long as the latter wanted it so.

Behind the plea for a dual system lie concerns with preserving smallholder agriculture as a nexus between land and labour which can develop direct linkages with capital that will not be brokered by land speculators, landlords and large farmer-traders:

Since labour market imperfections in the forms of supervising constraints are inherent in the labour process and are especially costly to overcome when social relations are tense, the government ought to support a programme of land allocation allowing only owner-cultivation to emerge or subsist. Given the pervasive presence of land, credit and insurance market imperfections, the stabilisation of such an agrarian structure would involve both the granting of officially registered individual titles to small peasant cultivators and the checking of restratification tendencies through state regulation of land market transactions (Platteau, 1992:248).

A second variant argues that the distribution of farm sizes and the existence of institutions such as sharecropping is based on factor scarcities and product demand. The neo-classical approach to sharecropping—which argues that it is irrational, inefficient and exploitative because the amount of the crop surrendered by the producer to the landlord is out of proportion to the land rent and the landlord's contribution to the arrangement—is being challenged. According to the new institutional economics, sharecropping continues to exist because it is rational and efficient and serves the needs of both parties to the transaction. It is attractive to the tenant who may not have sufficient capital to rent land and who has no access to markets for credit and insurance. Its risk-spreading features (in which the producer gets a share of the profits or a share of the losses at harvest, rather than paying a fixed rent in advance) are important in providing a market for credit and insurance. For the landlord, it has important functions in reducing the transaction costs of searching for, screening, and supervising hired labour (Bardhan, 1984). Paradoxically, these are the very attributes that were identified as characterising the efficiency of smallholder farmers.

Lipton (1993) has argued that the evidence suggests that both family smallholder farms and large-scale farms can be endogenous-incentive compatible institutions. The family farm is regarded as the most efficient system of farm production for the reason that it has residual claims to profit and higher incentives for members to work harder than hired labour (Binswanger and Deininger, 1993). However, the family farm suffers from problems of economic scale which make it difficult for it to introduce some

types of technology and services. Banks and marketing firms prefer to transact in large quantities rather than deal with many small production units. The strengths of large-scale agricultural units lie in the provision of economic functions such as processing, transport and marketing; services such as tractors, combine-harvesters and irrigation machinery, where the cost of the machinery may be too high for individual small family farms to bear, and credit, security and risk-insurance that are a prerequisite for smallholders to operate. These economies of scale can be met by well-designed marketing and credit cooperatives and by institutions that organise group lending schemes. The costs of assembling products from many sellers and the provision of inputs for small farmers can be reduced by eliminating barriers for traders and by promoting contract farming (Binswanger and Deininger, 1993) or “power compatible” approaches (Lipton, 1993) that support new structures that create a synergy between small farmers and larger agricultural units. This new paradigm replaces the earlier concerns with control over farm production that informed land reform for agricultural modernisation in the 1950s, with a new institutional framework for the integration of production—from input production to processing and marketing—that characterises agribusiness.

The argument that endogenous institutions are efficient because they continue to exist has been extended from small family farms to sharecropping arrangements and other forms of production relations that used to be considered as unequal or exploitative. However, this argument is essentially tautological—an institution is efficient because it exists and it exists because it continues to be efficient. It neglects the importance of power structures: many institutions continue to exist because the poor do not have the power to modify them. Although sharecroppers may lack capital to rent land, this is a result of their poverty and powerlessness. To raise sharecropping on a pedestal as an efficient, endogenous-incentive institution may serve to institutionalise the powerlessness and poverty of the rural poor. This search for the utility of endogenous institutions may sacrifice the aspirations of rural producers to the objective of reducing the transaction costs of development. It places the burdens of impoverishment and the provision of a safety net on the people.

Endogenous institutions, global restructuring and colonial precedents

Beyond concerns with reducing transaction costs, the focus on endogenous institutions may resonate with some of the underlying concerns of global economic restructuring, which seeks to foster greater small-farmer participation in global markets. Reforms which seek to integrate small farmers with

larger farm enterprises may form the basis for the expansion of agribusiness and the development of contractual relations that make small "family farms" dependent on agribusiness. The modernisation project sought to create labour relations in the image of advanced capitalism and siphon-off under-employed and unemployed rural labour to the urban industrial and rural capitalist agricultural sector.

By contrast, global economic restructuring seeks to maintain casual forms of labour and replace wage labour by contract arrangements that effectively remove the safety nets provided by the state and the industrial sector. This serves to minimise the costs of labour to industry and allows for the flexible augmentation and shedding of various forms of labour according to market needs. Many of the contemporary land tenure concerns and policy debates associated with structural adjustment and the World Bank, reflect policy issues that have emerged in the restructuring of US and European agriculture as a global transnational enterprise (McMichael, 1996; Marsden and Whatmore, 1994; Goodman and Redclift, 1991).

A fundamental weakness in the new institutional economics approach to land tenure and the new emphasis on indigenous land systems is the thesis that existing land relations in rural areas arise from endogenous factors associated with systemic features rooted in population and market pressures. This approach fails to examine the impact of global relations in moulding the institutional framework of land administration at the local level. Many of the endogenous institutions that are theorised are the outcomes of colonial rule which sought to refashion "traditional institutions" to obtain labour and land for capital penetration without creating a costly administrative structure. Imperial domination and colonialism resulted in a restructuring of African society in which some areas emerged as "micro-rich" export-crop producing areas, others as mining enclaves, and the rest as labour reserves for the export-producing areas (Amin, 1972). Chiefs were used as the agent of this restructuring, responsible for administering land in the export-crop producing areas and in initiating labour control (forced labour and tax policies that ensured young men migrated to the export-producing areas to gain wages for tax payment).

Given the changing political and economic environment, the institutions that developed at the local level to cope with change and provide social safety nets cannot be regarded as "traditional" precolonial institutions. While they made use of pre-existing organisations, the content of these organisations was dramatically changed by their incorporation into the world market and the world of capitalist commodities. In many cases these institutions had to adapt to conditions of impoverishment and growing social stratification. The chiefs and headmen of local institutions were accountable to the colonial state, yet maintained roles whose power was

justified in terms of tradition and “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm, 1983). The world of the cocoa farmers, with their land-purchasing companies, innovation of land transactions, processes of litigation, fleets of transport and other businesses, and their vulnerability to world trade cycles of boom and bust is hardly traditional. Tradition has been fashioned in the modern world of commodities.

Community, state, social differentiation and commerce

In the contemporary period, the alienation of land by the state for agribusiness and large-scale capitalist agriculture cannot be separated from developments at the community level. The alienation of this land usually occurs with the collaboration of political leaders at the community level. Like the chiefs of colonial times, these leaders are allowed to exist in national policy as representatives of the community because this enables the state to integrate rural communities into its vision of the development project. In the present period of globalisation and market liberalisation, the process of land alienation is increasingly driven by foreign capital. In the process of reorganising the economy, the state continually defines and redefines what constitutes the traditional community and refashions the levers that link the rural areas to national administration.

African traditional systems of land tenure are commonly seen as based on multiple land rights in which farmers have user-rights in agricultural land and chiefs have *de jure* rights in land, including rights to the extraordinary wealth of the land, such as mineral and timber wealth. While these rights are defined with recourse to tradition, the concession system, through which these resources are granted to national and international firms for production for the world market, has nothing to do with tradition. In this setting, traditional rights are anachronisms and through the authority of the chief the world of preordained status and tradition's chains is transformed into the world of free markets, in which commodities become *antiquated before they can ossify*.

Given the linkages between rural settlements, districts, the state and international capital, communities cannot be regarded as autonomous groups with a common interest. Political and economic interests cut through and across communities and integrate them in diverse ways with capital and the state. In the contemporary period, with its fashion for populist theories of participatory development and people-centred development, structural analysis of social stratification is relegated to the background, since it introduces unwanted noise that may undermine the new paradigm for development and create difficulty in charting a new “participatory” development agenda that can coexist with present globalisation trends. Participatory

development thus focuses on the contradictions between the state and the popular masses. This serves the overriding objective of globalisation and structural adjustment to shrink the state's control over the national economy and create new market opportunities for international capital. Without dissecting local communities and examining the processes of social differentiation within them, a genuine investigation into the impact of globalisation on the life of the people cannot be made.

In the contemporary period, in mainstream development studies, it is in the field of gender studies that notions of the undifferentiated community with a single interest have been most questioned. The presumption of a hegemonic community interest has often led to the marginalisation of women in development projects, where it is assumed that a woman is part of the household of a husband or father and that her interests will be represented by the male household head. Through this delegation of representation, the interests of women have been neglected. On irrigation projects, women farmers often lost their individual plots of land in the compulsory acquisition of land, but in the reallocation of land on irrigation projects land was given to the male household head instead of to women. This effectively transformed them into dependent household labour on male plots or forced them to hire themselves out as landless labour (Watts, 1993; Konings, 1986; Botchway, 1993). In the expansion of cash crop farming, women often found their interests in land displaced as rich male farmers began to develop interests in export crops and acquire larger areas, diminishing the areas in which female food crop farming could develop. Although women are often able to gain access to land, they rarely have control over the allocation of land, which is carried out by male lineage and household heads. As a result, women often have access to the poorest and smallest areas of land, rather than equal access with men to quality land (Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, 1996; Mackenzie, 1993; Davison, 1993).

While gender studies draw attention to structures of inequality within communities, they frequently fail to place this in the context of social stratification. The nodes of power and administration within rural communities do not affect only women, but also the youth, migrants and poorer strata of peasant households that are unable to command large shares of land and capital. The challenge is to understand how the interface between community organisations, commercial pressures and political relations works to differentiate landholdings and access to land, and embed land distribution within wider processes of the commodification of agriculture and social differentiation.

These factors are largely neglected by the new institutional economics which tends to equate community lineage structures with the atomistic family farms of Western agriculture. It sees the family structure as a func-

tional production unit absorbing transaction costs rather than as a structural unit that defines rights in land in relation to dominant sociopolitical interests. These sociopolitical relations define the distribution of land between various autonomous household production units and lead to social differentiation within lineage structures. Paradoxically, while the new institutional economics cautions that the impact of individual land titling may result in the erosion of women's access to user rights in land (Platteau, 1996), it is less concerned about the lack of women's rights to control land and rights to determine the allocation of land within pre-existing community structures.

The new institutional economics has opened up the study of the organisational structure of local communities, the rationality of individual behaviour within the constraints of existing institutions, and the interface between local processes and wider macrostructures. However, its concern with functionalism and the utility of low transaction costs—which panders to current policy concerns about rolling back the state and displacing the burdens of social welfare and infrastructure—prevents it from examining structural aspects in the transformation of agriculture, and the rise of new social and political alignments in rural areas that result from the impact of globalisation and the expansion of transnational agribusiness.

Defining the scope and methodology of the study

This study argues that the debate between state-induced and community-driven land tenure reform is fruitless, since both these levels of organisation have become closely intertwined from the inception of colonialism, when the community was redefined as an endogenous institution that carried out the self-administration of colonial policy. Thus, a need exists to critically analyse the ideological conceptualisation of community-based development in the present period, and the role assigned to the community in the globalisation project administered under the trusteeship of the World Bank, IMF and other development policy centres.

This study is critical of the rhetoric of community-based development as an adjunct to rolling back the state and lowering transaction costs. It is also critical of a defence of the state made on the basis of the contrast between an era of state intervention in which the welfare and social development of African people was made paramount in development planning, and the era of structural adjustment in which all the social developments of the 1960s–80s have been eroded to promote liberalisation and privatisation. The early period has seen abuses of the rights of the people, suppression of their struggles and mass organisations, and the organisation of state machinery to further the interests of the dominant class and their alliance with international capital. By the mid-1970s, when nationalisation and indigenisation

had reached their zenith, African states began to develop mechanisms for negotiating joint economic ventures with international capital. It is this period which marks a turning point and laid the foundation for the rhetoric of structural adjustment.

The major reasons why African governments introduce economic liberalisation and deregulation is to make their countries more attractive to foreign investment. This is intended to create an enabling environment that will encourage inflows of foreign investment. Since private investment was already a feature of economic life in the 1960s to 1980s, the significance of the implementation of adjustment is that it opens up new spheres for international capital investment. This builds upon policies introduced in the 1970s to encourage foreign investment.

Recession in the 1970s eroded the favourable terms of trade for primary commodities dating from the 1950s and 1960s. International capital became a scarce commodity in developing countries, resulting in a weaker position for developing countries in the international arena. Developing countries could no longer set the conditions for the operation of international capital within their borders. Thus, structural adjustment was initiated by the IMF and the World Bank to regulate and set conditions favourable for the penetration of global capital. Prior to this, the basic needs framework of the World Bank had established the framework for the incorporation of rural producers into capital markets and the national economy (World Bank, 1975). Structural adjustments aim to complete this process by facilitating the incorporation of national economies into the global market.

In the context of the land question in rural areas, the fundamental question that needs to be posed relates to the repercussions of globalisation on land relations and the nature of the penetration of capital in the agricultural sector. To understand the transformations that the dominant policy frameworks of the World Bank seek to achieve, it is necessary to understand the fundamental changes that have occurred in agricultural capitalism during the post-war period, and how World Bank policies for the small farmer sector in developing countries and for land reform fit into these changes. This requires a framework for understanding the structural transformation of agriculture within world capitalism in the post-war period.

Within the nationstate in Africa, it is necessary to understand the changes in land relations that were brought about in the colonial and early periods, and the factors that have influenced changing alignments between the nation state, national capitalism and international capital. This requires a political economy framework that examines various class alliances and antagonisms that emerge within the nation state in its transformation from colonial subjugation to independence.

At the farm level, it is necessary to analyse the internal pressures within the agrarian sector that have brought about crisis in the old modes of production and increasing incorporation into international capital markets. This task is approached by developing case studies that examine the development of the rural economy in response to different pressures and forms of incorporation by the state and capital.

The penetration of capital is uneven, involving different types of incorporation into distinct productive sectors and markets. Therefore, the aim of case studies should be to document the effects of particular forms of capitalist development on particular communities. It should not attempt to project local-level research on to the whole rural economy, distilling an archetypal rural structure or an average village for the rural sector. The case studies should be informed by the life experiences of individuals within communities, rather than solicited from household heads and lineage heads and community representatives. The workings of the land system need to be distilled from the living experience of ordinary farmers, women and youth rather than formulated from recitations of the ideal operation of customary land tenure solicited from community representatives in group meetings or discussions with chiefs, notables and elders. Beyond examining the social relations of production within specific communities, it is also important to document farmers' perceptions of changes in their livelihood and access to land, and their relations with the state and international capital.

In this research, an attempt has been made to develop case studies of different socioeconomic situations in a single regional setting. This includes two communities that have been incorporated into the economic sphere of an agribusiness company, the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation, as contract farmers. One of the two communities has had a large proportion of its land expropriated by the company while the other retains its land. The other two case studies examine communities that have had lands expropriated for the development of forest reserves. The case studies are drawn from the Akyem area of the Eastern Region of Ghana, an area with a long history of land purchases and involvement in export-crop production. The area is rich in resources, including forests and minerals, and enables the impact of multiple land rights and international market penetration into regional resource extraction to be observed.

The interrelationship between the penetration of international capital, the restructuring of the economy, the political economy of social and class formations, and local livelihood struggles for access to resources inform the structure of this work. The first chapter examines the emergence of the modern agrifood system in the post-war economy. This system comprises a constellation of private capital, state support structures and state-sponsored research that favour agribusiness. The chapter traces the influences of this

system on agricultural policies and structural adjustment in the Ghanaian economy and in the conceptualisation of the land question. The second chapter traces the evolution of land relations in Ghana from the colonial period to the present. It examines how the concept of tradition and customary land rights has been manipulated to ensure that the peasantry have no secure rights in land and to ensure control over the land by a class of landowning chiefs at the beck and call of the state. The landowning chiefs have become the pivot of rural development and the processes through which capital can gain access to land and control over productive ventures. The third chapter examines the struggles of communities over land and livelihood issues and popular perceptions that have developed about the state, the economy and development in the Akyem area. In the fourth chapter, we offer a general review of the land question in the light of the evidence we have marshalled in the study and make the case for a new perspective in the study of land rights.

1. The modern agrifood system, the World Bank and the post-colonial state

The modern food system began to take shape in the US in the 1930s. It is not only based on control by capital over farming, but control over agriculture—of the processes from production of inputs, seeds and machinery to the marketing of processed food. This development occurred at the confluence of major innovations in three separate branches of industry: mechanical technology, petrochemicals and plant breeding. It was the development in plant genetics of crop hybridisation techniques that opened up the potential for industrial control of agriculture. Plant breeding programmes could be designed to develop new varieties of crops with superior yields that were responsive to chemical fertilisers and to plant architectures that were adapted to mechanical harvesting. Integrated packages of input and mechanical technology were created for use with these crops which assured increased yield but also increased costs of production.

The development of hybrid seeds that could not reproduce themselves or produced vastly inferior versions of themselves that were not commercially viable ensured that farmers became locked into agricultural input markets (Kloppenborg, 1988; Goodman and Redclift, 1993). While crop breeding programmes could equally well have been developed with open-pollinated lines (Simmonds, 1979), the resulting genetic information would have been a free public good and farmers could have freely planted the improved seed from their harvest, knowing they would reproduce to character. By successfully lobbying for limited participation by public research in the development of hybrids from genetic materials that originated from farmers' own seeds, and for breeder and patent rights in finished seed products, industry assured the dependence of farmers on purchased seeds and technology packages. Where hybridisation technology was unsuccessful in creating new breeds, as in wheat, and new high-yielding varieties were produced through open pollination, patents legislation was introduced to prevent farmers from reproducing modern varieties of seeds for planting on their farms. This in effect meant that planted seeds have to be purchased from commercial seed firms. In some instances, farmers have found that the seeds they have developed have been appropriated and patented by commercial seed breeders and they no longer have rights to plant their own seeds (Cordeiro, 1993).

This has led to a reorientation in agriculture. Increased yields have been achieved by capitalisation of the farm and investment in technology rather than by an extension of acreage and of labour invested in the land. In 1949 labour was receiving 43 per cent of the value realised in US agriculture as compared to 20 per cent of the value realised in 1968 (Vogeler, 1981). Prior to the 1930s

family farms supplied many of their own inputs: they repaired machinery, mixed feed, and used their own manure. They also stored, processed, and distributed agricultural products. Both these input and output functions have been eclipsed by specialised agribusiness firms, leaving only agricultural production to farmers (Vogeler, 1981).

Levins and Lewontin (1985:211) further comment that

farmers used to grow their own seed, raise their own horses and mules, raise the hay the livestock ate, and spread manure from these animals on their land. Now farmers buy their seed from Pioneer Hybrid Seed Company, their "mules" from the Ford Motor Company, the "hay" to feed these "mules" from Exxon, and their "manure" from Union Carbide.

As a result of this expansion of industry into agriculture, the greater part of the value realised in agriculture originates off-farm. In 1967, the value of sales by farm-supply firms in the US totalled \$31 billion or about 33 per cent of the total value of domestically produced food purchased by US consumers. The farm sector added \$12 billion or about 12 per cent of final retail value and the farm-product marketing sector added the remaining \$52 billion or 55 per cent of total retail food value. By 1977 agribusiness input and processing firms received 88 per cent of the market value of agricultural products and farmers only received 8 per cent. In 1973, 43 per cent of farmers' expenditures were on inputs of purchased feed, purchased livestock, fertiliser and lime, seeds and pesticides as compared to 8 per cent on labour (Vogeler, 1981). Similarly, in British agriculture Goodman and Redclift (1991:57) note that in a 1931 survey carried out in the village of Hooten Pagnell the average amount spent on inputs (feedstock, fertilisers and seeds) was about £180 which was "not much more than a fifth of what was received from market production". By the 1980s, farmers spent more than one-third of what was received from farm sales on inputs of this kind.

This dependence on inputs has created a *technological treadmill* of escalating costs in farming, which for the vast majority of farmers, has been a "nightmare" (Cochrane, 1979:352). Failure to climb on this treadmill results in the farmers going bankrupt while getting on results in the vast majority of small farmers incurring large farm debts. In the state of Mississippi alone, one million people left agriculture between 1940 and 1960, a decline of 62 per cent in its farm population (Goodman and Redclift, 1991:105). By 1974, the

total farm debt in the US as a percentage of net farm income was 356 per cent, or 3.5 times greater than income (Vogeler, 1981:116).

Although the majority of small farmers are under pressure, the family farm—with its own land and labour and decisionmaking focused on the household rather than on specialised farm managers and labourers—has become the dominant production unit in US agriculture. In other countries in which agriculture was formerly dominated by a small number of large rentier landowners, the owner-occupied family farm has now become dominant. In Britain in the 1870s, 80 per cent of the land was controlled by 7,000 people and 360 landholding families controlled 50 per cent of the land. In 1919, only 11 per cent of farms were owner-occupied. This rose to 37 per cent in 1930, 54 per cent in 1960, 64 per cent in 1978 and 71 per cent in 1982. The average farm size has also increased from 63 acres before the First World War to 278 acres in 1978. These changes have come about through deliberate policy measures to promote freehold as a means of encouraging more land to be actively cultivated. Through imposition of high death duties and other taxes, landlords were forced to break up their estates (Goodman and Redclift, 1991:64). The propertied farmer fits more into the ethic of capitalism than the landowner siphoning off agricultural surplus profits as rents.

Agricultural production is still highly skewed. In Britain, two-thirds of farms are less than 50 hectares and are exclusively dependent on family labour. In contrast, 58 per cent of the land is farmed by 16 per cent of farmers (Goodman and Redclift, 1991:65). In the US the largest 2 per cent of farmers have 14 per cent of the land but account for nearly 37 per cent of farm sales (Vogeler, 1981:134).

High costs and insecurity from being on the technological treadmill have resulted in many farmers signing contract farming arrangements with agribusiness companies to produce specific quantities and qualities of crops according to the companies' directives. The processing company usually makes all the technical and marketing decisions about planting and harvesting and provides the necessary farm inputs and credits to meet the company's production requirements. The contract arrangements provide farmers with some guarantee of prices and markets in a highly unstable world. However, in signing contracts farmers lose the chance of gaining higher prices on the open market and making their own autonomous managerial decisions.

Contract arrangements have grown rapidly. In the early 1970s, 10 per cent of all farms in the US had them. By the mid-1980s, 30 per cent of farms had contracts with agribusiness (Vogeler, 1981:138; Watts, 1990:149). Contract arrangements are attractive to agribusiness as they enable them to treat farmers as the equivalent of employees without all the social security and welfare obligations associated with employees. Moreover, such arrangements free them from tying up capital in land and exempt them from

property taxes. Agribusiness firms can exert powerful monopoly control over commodity prices on the open market by having large numbers of contract farmers. In certain sectors, contracts give companies a complete monopoly over the market. In the vegetable processing industry, agribusiness processors produce 10 per cent of the total crops and their contract farmers another 85 per cent (Vogeler, 1981). As Vogeler (1981:143) comments,

the net effect of farm input oligopolies, market oligopsonies, and contract farming is that farmers have become largely employees, frequently being told what to produce, in what quantities and qualities, at what times, and for what prices. Power rests essentially with those who control farm supplies, agricultural markets and credit. The remaining family farmers have been reduced to assembly-line cogs in the integrated food industry, but most farmers persist in thinking—even defending the idea—that family farms exist and can survive under the capitalist mode of production. Ironically, the more family farms are destroyed, the more tenaciously farmers, politicians, and the public praise this institution.

The technology-treadmill mode of development has created a general crisis of overproduction in the agricultural sector and market instability which threatens the sector's continued survival. In the 1930s, the New Deal in the US attempted to resolve this crisis by instituting state intervention measures. These sought to subsidise the idling of productive land, stockpile surplus production, establish minimum prices, and introduce farm credit programmes that increased the availability of favourable low interest capital loans to the agricultural sector. This has enabled the pace of innovation to be maintained and intensified within agriculture by public agricultural research sectors that are pulled forward by industry. The primary beneficiaries have been large farmers and agribusiness—those who have the most interests in and benefits from maintaining the technology treadmill—rather than the debt-riddled family farms.

The globalisation of the modern agrifood system

Following the Second World War, the US agribusiness system of food production was extended into Western Europe with the Marshall Plan. US food exports were used to relieve post-war food shortages and exports of fertilisers and feed were used to rebuild and modernise European agriculture. Exports of livestock feed have remained the most permanent aspect of this US contribution to European agriculture.

With the extension of IMF- and World Bank-controlled aid and capital market restructuring to developing countries in the name of development, the agricultural sectors of newly independent nation-states came under pressure from the modern agrifood system (George, 1977; McMichael, 1996; Goodman and Redclift, 1991). The dominant ideology for development in

this period was “accelerated industrialisation” and “modernisation” based on support for manufacturing and mechanised agriculture. Cheap food was required to maintain a cheap wage labour force that would attract foreign investment and capital accumulation. This was met by imports of cheap food, thereby eroding the prices of food locally produced by peasant cultivators, and by the promotion of mechanised production using imported inputs. Mechanised agriculture was often initiated by state farms or by capitalist farmers in close alliance with the state. These developments created important markets for the rapidly growing sectors of the post-war economy—surplus food production, capital goods or machinery and agricultural input supplies.

The origins of the transfer of the modern agrifood technology complex to developing countries can be dated to the 1940s when the Rockefeller Foundation initiated a programme in Mexico to see if the advances in plant breeding in the US could be transferred to semitropical zones through breeding programmes based on the genetic development of seeds from that climatic zone (Dahlberg, 1979; Hewitt de Alcantara, 1976 ; Stackman *et. al.*, 1967). From these beginnings, this technology complex was further extended into other developing countries by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, eventually leading to the creation of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines in 1959, The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico in 1963, the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria in 1967, the International Potato Center (CIP) in Peru in 1972, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India in 1972, and the International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA) in 1974.

In 1971, the international agricultural centres were unified into the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), an advisory group for developing nations coordinated by the World Bank. The CGIAR aims to strengthen the agricultural technology base in developing countries and to develop strategic research which could be adapted by national agricultural services. Through this organisation, agricultural research policy is coordinated and redefined internationally, leading to the implementation of uniform approaches to technology-generation and extension. Within this system, the role of national agricultural research in developing countries is largely to adapt recommended technology developed at the international level to national conditions and to encourage the use of modern seed varieties and input technology (Ravnborg, 1992).

In the early 1960s, World Bank programmes for agricultural development focused on the provision of adequate productive infrastructure for increasing agricultural productivity. Major development activities were concerned with large-scale mechanised agriculture and irrigation projects.

This was reflected in the agricultural research paradigms of technology diffusion. Innovations were expected to be taken up by richer progressive farmers and then diffuse to the laggards as they realised the benefits of new technology. The failure of technologies to diffuse down the ranks of smallholder farmers resulted in new orientations in agricultural research, with farming systems research working out modes of adapting new technology to the small farmer environment (Collinson, 1972; Wharton, 1970).

By 1975, World Bank policy frameworks began to show growing concern for small-scale farmers, poverty-oriented programmes, the “basic needs” approach, “social participation”, and “integrated development”. The underlying philosophical framework of this approach is elaborated in great detail in *The Assault on World Poverty* (World Bank, 1975).

The Assault on World Poverty defines the problems of poverty in terms of marginalisation from development planning:

The poor ... suffer because they have little access to technology and services, and because the institutions which would sustain a higher level of productivity are lacking. In many cases, vested interests operate to ensure not only that the benefits of productive activity are distributed inequitably, but that the poor are denied access to the inputs, services and organisations which would allow them to increase their productivity (p.21).

This marginalisation prevents rural areas from contributing to national economic development:

[R]ural areas have labour, land and at least some capital which, if mobilised, could reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. This implies fuller development of existing resources, including the construction of infrastructure such as roads and irrigation works, the introduction of new production technologies, and the creation of new types of institutions and organisations Rural development recognises, however, that improved food supplies and nutrition, together with basic services such as health and education, cannot only directly improve the physical well-being and quality of life of the rural poor, but can also indirectly enhance the productivity and the ability to contribute to the national economy. *It is concerned with the modernisation and monetarization of rural society, and with its transition from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy* [my emphasis] (p.3).

Since the assistance given by the World Bank to nation states integrates their development plan into the World Bank’s vision of a capitalist world economy, the objectives of rural development can be interpreted as integrating peasant farmers into a global economy and facilitating the commoditisation of rural areas.

The Assault on World Poverty argues that with a growing rural population and worsening people-land ratios, increases in output and incomes must

come through higher yields and higher value crops, access to new technology and capital to utilise it:

The new seed-fertiliser-water technology for wheat, rice and maize provides the first major opportunity for extending science-based agriculture to low-income, small-scale producers of traditional crops. Further adaptive research and extension are required to ensure an adequate rate of technology change. Special programmes are necessary to help the rural poor to contribute more fully to an increase of output (World Bank, 1975:5).

The *Assault* goes on to focus on provision of credit as a central need of these new programmes: "In the initial stages of the transition to a more productive agriculture, access to short-term credit for purchasing fertiliser, improved seeds, pesticides, etc., is often of greater importance for small farmers than long-term credit" (p.119). However, it is recommended that credit is provided in kind for purchased inputs rather than cash since this will "provide the institution with some assurances that the credit is used for the purposes intended" (p.117).

The institutional arrangements proposed for the provision of farm credit are essentially based on the model of contract farming:

One way of lending to small farmers is through special crop and project authorities. They have provided a satisfactory channel for reaching relatively large numbers of smallholders. Since crop authorities can provide a guaranteed market (perhaps with quotas) and are usually in a position to ensure a profitable return, they have been able to conduct successful credit operations ... This approach combines support and supervision by technical field staff with collection of repayment by deduction from returns. Clearly this is an effective means of delivering seasonal credit to smallholders, which should be utilised whenever possible (p.115).

The *Assault* further elaborates: "A variation would be to employ contracts whereby the credit agency is paid a percentage of the farmer's output rather than a fixed amount" (p.108).

The *Assault* recognised that in the 1970s many governments lacked a commitment to promoting corporate agribusiness as a road to national "rural development". It, therefore, advocates the promotion of development projects in which government participates as a way of demonstrating the advantages of contract farming: "[M]ost governments are willing to experiment at the project level and to examine the results. This should provide the basis for dialogue between the countries and the Bank from which broader approaches may eventually develop" (p.6).

During the 1970s, the prototype for agribusiness in developing countries was initiated as a joint project venture between parastatal organisations and the World Bank to explore the modes and logistics for establishing contract

farming schemes. At the same time, many governments were willing to develop joint partnerships with agribusiness.

The commitment of the World Bank to a rural poverty focus was further deepened by the work of Lipton (1977) and Bates (1981) on the urban bias and pricing distortions of the state, which charted the future direction of the Bank as publicised in the Berg Report, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (1981). According to this line of analysis, the stagnation and decline of the agricultural sector in Africa has been brought about through inappropriate government interventions that focus on benefiting a coalition of urban interests and large-scale mechanised farmers. The urban coalition consists of urban entrepreneurs seeking support for their manufacturing interests through protectionism against imported commodities and high prices for industrial commodities on the national market, the urban wage and salaried labour interested in cheap food gained from price controls, and entrepreneurs seeking subsidises for their investment in large-scale mechanised agriculture (Lipton, 1977). It was argued that prices were distorted through pro-industrial import substitution policies and protection which raised the price of consumer goods and non-subsidised agricultural inputs. Producer prices for agricultural commodities were maintained at an artificially low level to increase the state's rentier revenues. However, this depressed agricultural production within rural areas by removing incentives to produce export crops and increased supplies of food. Artificially high exchange rates also extracted economic surpluses from the agricultural export sector by depressing the real value of agricultural commodities. Excessive investments by the state in state farms and subsidising inputs for a select clientele of large-scale mechanised farmers also diverted the provision of agricultural services away from smallholder farmers.

The recommendations for reform, which came to fuel the structural adjustment programme, included the upward adjustment of export crop prices, removal of controls on food prices, liberalisation of currency exchange controls, removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs, and the disbandment and privatisation of agricultural parastatals.

These changes in policy frameworks are often seen as marking distinct policy phases. However, in the following section it will be argued that they fall into one historical pattern which is concerned with the extension of the modern agrifood system and agribusiness. This will be demonstrated focusing on Ghana.

The modern agrifood system in Ghana

The beginnings of large-scale mechanised agriculture in Ghana can be dated to the terminal colonial period in the 1950s with the creation of the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC). The aim of ADC was to experiment with the development of mechanised agriculture in the cocoa and rubber sectors in the forest and with food crops in the savanna and transition zone. Other projects included promotion of irrigation on the flood plains of the Volta and experimentation and promotion of chemical fertilisers. The ADC was liquidated in 1962 with heavy deficits and the State Farms Corporation was established in the same year to engage in full-scale mechanised production. Through compulsory acquisition large areas of land were expropriated for the state farms and 25 per cent of agricultural expenditure was allocated to this sector. Although the state farm sector was expected to become the stalwart of agricultural production, it never succeeded and most food continued to be produced by the peasant farm sector. The emphasis of state farms was on the production of raw materials for agro-industries, including sugar, palm oil, rubber, and cotton. Only 40 per cent of the total acreage of the state farms was under food crops, mainly rice and maize (Hansen, 1989).

Following the 1966 coup, the major emphasis in agriculture shifted to the private sector and some of the state farms were disbanded or privatised. Private capitalist agriculture was supported by the state by allocating subsidised imported machinery, farm inputs and soft loans to large-scale farmers. The large-scale farmers included many urban bureaucrats, civil servants, military officers and entrepreneurs looking for new fields of investment. In the 1970s the mechanised rice sector in the north became the main recipient of inputs and loans (Konings, 1986). In the early 1970s, the subsidy on fertilisers amounted to 77 per cent of the c.i.f. price and 78 per cent of fertilisers were distributed in the Northern and Upper regions largely for the production of rice (Akoto, 1987). Most of these fertilisers went to large-scale capitalist farmers.

During the 1970s, as food imports grew and laid a heavy burden on the balance of accounts, a new emphasis on agriculture began to be articulated in the Operation Feed Yourself programme (OFY). This was a populist programme of mass mobilisation to raise domestic food production. This was consonant with the dominant basic needs approach being promoted by the World Bank. Donor-supported integrated development programmes such as URADEP (Upper Regional Agricultural Development Programme) and NORADEP (Northern Regional Agricultural Development Programme) became the avenues through which the rural population was mobilised for agricultural development. While these programmes were supposed to

increase food production and rural incomes and provide basic amenities for rural communities, much of the aid was siphoned off to the richer farmers. There was little peasant participation in the design and implementation of these programmes (Hansen, 1989). Incentives for cheap machinery, inputs and credit were made available, but these largely serviced aspirant capitalist farmers. As Hansen (1989:206) wryly comments: “while tractors, combine harvesters, etc. were made easily available together with attractive provisions for their purchase or hire, the basic instrument of agricultural production in the country which was used by the mass of the peasantry—the hoe and cutlass—were almost unavailable and could only be obtained at speculative prices”.

Nevertheless, in some areas, such as the vicinity of state plantations in the transitional zone, the provision of subsidised inputs and tractor hiring services has effected changes in the agricultural technology used by a large percentage of farmers. This is illustrated by a comparison of maize production parameters around Ejura, in the vicinity of the Ejura State Farms where modern technology has been taken up by farmers, with those in the Central Region, where modern technology has not been adopted (table 1.1).

Table 1.1 A comparison of maize production parameters in the Central Region and Ejura area

Location	Central Region	Ejura (Ashanti Region)
Ecological zone	Forest	Transition
per cent fields prepared with tractor	0	58
per cent fields fertilised (chemicals)	6	66
per cent fields intercropped	87	23
Average years cropped	3.2	0.5

Source: Tripp (1993)

The rise of contract farming

During the 1970s, in collaboration with the World Bank, the Acheampong-led National Redemption Council (NRC) military regime developed a new approach to agriculture, the essence of which involved direct intervention in the process of peasant agriculture through *encadrement*¹ (Konings, 1986).

¹. This refers to the process by which the state creates levers that bind the peasantry to commodity markets and to agricultural authorities whose prescriptions they are coerced into implementing. Farmers are provided with incentives in cash or in kind by development projects in return for following the instructions of the project, planting the crops or varieties of crops dictated, following laid-out cultivation practices, and possibly selling to the project marketing authority at dictated prices.

This differed from the earlier approach to agricultural modernisation, which was based on the creation of new agricultural sectors of capitalist farmers or state farmers and which sought to replace peasant production. This new approach sought to create outgrower-type linkages that forced peasants to produce specific crops and varieties of crops in compliance with specific technical recommendations. These outgrower linkages were mainly focused on the cocoa, oil palm, cotton, and tobacco sectors and on the production of rice and vegetables on irrigation projects. They mainly sought to address problems of shortfalls in the national production of raw materials for agro-industrial and export-crop production by creating levers, based on control over the land or credit, to cajole farmers into using new technologies and to produce according to the needs of specific markets and companies.

In the cocoa sector, the World Bank and the government of Ghana launched the Cocoa Rehabilitation Project in the Eastern Region in 1971 and in the Ashanti Region in 1975. The aim of this project was to increase the declining cocoa harvest by supporting the replanting of new hybrid cocoa and the adoption of modern agricultural practices of fertiliser and pesticide use. In the Eastern Region, the project aimed to take over 51,000 acres of cocoa farms of which 36,000 acres were to be replanted with new hybrid varieties. In the Ashanti Region, 42,500 acres were to be replanted with modern hybrids. Through the provision of credit, in the form of seeds, inputs and labour services for rehabilitation, farmers were encouraged to participate in the scheme. Participation involved the project management taking over the land for replanting and training farmers in improved production techniques. These inputs had to be repaid over 13 years from the seventh year. The project suffered from a poor response from farmers and saw the participation of many absentee farmers. In the Eastern Region, between 40 and 60 per cent of participants were absentee farmers. The replanting exercise proceeded at a slow pace as a result of the inadequate provision of labour by the project (Konings, 1986).

In the irrigation sector, outgrowers became a distinctive feature of several projects in the 1970s. This followed a pattern of state expropriation of land from peasant farmers on the pretext of making way for more efficient agriculture. For instance, on the Weija Irrigation Project,

the Weija Irrigation Feasibility Report ... identified land utilisation in the project area to be well below capacity. It claimed that, in any given year, less than 30 per cent of the area was under crops and cropping intensity on the cultivated land was low. The introduction of irrigation was viewed as a means of promoting agricultural production through expanding the overall area under cultivation, increasing cropping intensity and raising crop yield per unit of area. The main focus of attention was on intensification of farm production through irrigation along with new cropping patterns, improved agricultural techniques and high-yielding varieties (Botchway, 1993:28).

On the irrigation projects in northern Ghana, promises were usually made to the expropriated communities that they would be compensated for the land and that in future they would be provided with amenities and support in developing modern farming. These often did not materialise. Land was only apportioned back to a small percentage of expropriated farmers and these were organised into block farming groups (Konings, 1986). Farmers who were reapportioned land were reinstated as outgrowers. They were supplied with credit in the form of seedlings, inputs, tractor- and technical services. They were instructed how to grow these seedlings and were forced to sell their produce to the project authority at prices well below those prevailing on the market. The projects made no provision for them to grow their own food and they were forced to buy this at prevailing market prices. As one project manager informed Konings (1986:308) at the Tono irrigation projects in the Upper East Region, "You cannot allow peasant farmers to continue growing millet, for the large investment in the project does not justify the cultivation of a crop which is not worthwhile. Economics is the watchword. You have to bully people with a traditional mind to grow cash crops because it is ultimately in their interest". Failure to repay credits could result in eviction from the project or cancelling future lines of credit, which made it impossible for farmers to maintain the planting methods and inputs that were required for participation.

Similar outgrower schemes were created in the forest zone for oil palm cultivation. At Kwae, the World Bank and government of Ghana established the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation in the early 1970s. In this project, 9,000 hectares were expropriated from peasant farmers by the state and some of them were incorporated into the project as contract farmers, working on plots hired out to them by the project or on their own land. This project is dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.

The rise of agribusiness in Ghana

During the 1970s, the NRC/SMC government launched the Special Scheme for Participation in Agriculture which encouraged foreign firms and transnational corporations to invest in agriculture. This grew out of the recognition of the failure of the state and private indigenous capital to solve problems of low agricultural output, and the promotion of agribusiness by donors. Many transnational corporations had accumulated large profits in Ghana which they were prevented from transferring abroad by foreign exchange control regulations and by the lack of foreign exchange held by the state to effect these transfers. By encouraging these firms to invest in agriculture, it was hoped to ease the burden of the unpatriated earnings of foreign firms and raise agricultural and agro-industrial production (Graham,

1993; Hansen, 1989; Jonah, 1980). The projects were to be financed by the accumulated profits and dividends of foreign firms in Ghana. State participation in the scheme included equity shares, land acquisition for the projects, provision of a social infrastructure and of favourable concessions—such as exemption from duty and levies on imported machinery and inputs and a five-year tax holiday.

A condition for investment was the creation of outgrower schemes and Ghanaian ownership of not less than 40 per cent. However, the response from foreign firms was not enthusiastic, given the state of the Ghanaian economy. Only 12 firms participated in the project of which only four were still operating in 1986. The other firms had been frustrated by attempts to get foreign exchange for importing vital inputs and problems and litigation in the acquisition of land (Graham, 1993). The state also encouraged private international capital to participate in its own projects. In 1981, the management contract for the Veve and Tono irrigation projects was granted to Tate and Lyle (Konings, 1986).

The extent of expropriation of land for these pilot agribusiness projects was significant. Thus, under the Special Scheme for Participation in Agriculture the government acquired holdings of 26.54 square miles for the Benso Oil Palm Plantation (BOPP). BOPP had three major shareholders: Unilever held 57 per cent of shares, Barclays Bank International 3 per cent and the government of Ghana 40 per cent. In creating the plantation, 3,000 peasant farmers were expropriated, as were three large pre-existing Ghanaian capitalist farms covering an area of more than 10 square miles (Jonas, 1980).

By the mid-1970s the state had lost confidence in the ability of indigenous capitalist farmers and state-managed farms to initiate an agricultural transformation and was beginning to turn to partnerships with international capital and agribusiness as the mode through which to generate capital. Outgrower schemes were written into these projects as a means of camouflaging the expropriation of land, by appearing to give farmers a role in new development projects, but also as a means of creating levers by introducing contract farming and integrated peasant farms as a source of low-cost labour for agribusiness.

The achievements of the state

The failure of the state to generate a viable agricultural sector in the pre-structural adjustment period has frequently been attributed to inappropriate market policies, inappropriate technologies, inefficient management, etc. Despite these failures, the achievement of the state in this period lies in creating or experimenting with the creation of a modern agricultural infrastructure with research services and large farms. This represents the bridge

between the colonial concern with mercantile control over the marketing of export crops of peasant producers, which characterised much of West Africa (but not all of Africa), to the development of mechanised production with the use of modern inputs. In the introduction of new technologies, the performance of the state has been mixed. There have been many failures, but there have also been significant developments. In the cocoa sector, the state has successfully created the infrastructure for the production of new hybrid cocoa which produces large yields quickly. These have been widely adopted by farmers, although they are not highly resistant to disease and require the use of large quantities of pesticide to produce good yields. Similarly, an infrastructure has been created for raising and distributing high-yielding oil palm varieties. Recently, new varieties of cola have been produced. In the Brong Ahafo area, many farmers have adopted new varieties of maize, cowpea and groundnuts as well as modern inputs.

The state has also set in motion mechanisms for expropriating peasant farmers for the establishment of large modern agricultural concerns. This has served as a basis for the erosion of the autonomy of the peasantry and the creation of the basis upon which agribusiness and the modern agrifood system can reach further into the Ghanaian economy. During the early independence period, agricultural modernisation was closely tied to nationalism and the promotion of state agriculture and of an indigenous agricultural capitalist class. By the mid-1970s, the focus of agricultural policy turned from promotion of an indigenous capitalist class to encouraging international capitalist investment in the agricultural sector and an alliance with agribusiness.

Structural adjustment and agricultural modernisation

The main impact of structural adjustment on agricultural modernisation is to promote the liberalisation of agricultural markets, divestment of parastatal companies, and export-oriented growth. Market liberalisation has taken the form of the removal of subsidies on inputs and seeds, the upward adjustment of cocoa prices to encourage increased production, the removal of protective tariffs on imported foodstuffs and the introduction of exchange-market liberalisation and of a floating market currency. The aim of structural adjustment in the agricultural sector is to remove distortions created by the state's appropriation of rentier capital, to encourage increased agricultural production and to promote private investment in the agricultural sector by encouraging the state to divest public enterprises. The argument for divestiture is that private investment will be more efficient than public investment, and that state investment in productive activities has been to the detriment of government investment in infrastructure (Sarris, 1994). By divesting itself of public enterprise, the state will be able to focus its development initiatives

on the creation of a public infrastructure. Thus, in the era of structural adjustment there has been an intense focus on the development of the transport infrastructure that links rural areas to the main market centres.

Prices of cocoa have been upwardly adjusted, with farmers receiving nearly 50 per cent of the world market price as compared to the 20 per cent they received in the 1970s. However, this gain has been offset by sagging world market prices for cocoa and other primary commodities. The internal marketing of cocoa has been privatised and the cocoa services cut back. The cocoa services no longer market inputs. In many rural areas this has led to a vacuum in input supplies, with private traders reluctant to invest in this field. Many farmers in remote areas have to travel great distances to acquire inputs and have reduced their reliance on pesticides or no longer use them.

The removal of producer prices on agricultural supplies has led to large price increases in inputs. From 1990 to 1994 the price of NPK fertiliser increased by 380 per cent while urea has increased by 190 per cent. In 1995, the price of urea increased by a further 416%. In 1995, the price of NPK declined by 150 per cent as a result of concessionary prices from the Japanese government. In 1996, the government reintroduce a 20 per cent subsidy on fertilisers as a result of declining sales and pressure from large farmers (ISSER, 1996). The prices of chemical fertilisers have also increased in relation to the price of food crops. Hailu (1990) reports that in 1981 the price of one bag of maize could purchase 5.5 bags of fertiliser as compared to 3.3 bags in 1986. As a result of unfavourable prices, fertiliser use has declined through the 1990s from an average of 38,595 tonnes for the period 1985 to 1989 to 24,568 tonnes for 1990 to 1994 (ISSER, 1996).

Prices of insecticide increased 430 per cent between 1986–89 and 1989–92. This resulted in declining use. In 1987 1.4 million litres of insecticide were purchased, declining to 0.6 million litres in 1990 and 0.2 million litres in 1993. In response to this situation the price of insecticide was cut 170 per cent resulting in increased sales of one million litres in 1994 and 1.3 million litres in 1995 (ISSER, 1996). Pesticides are mainly used in the cocoa industry to control a number of viral and fungal diseases that become endemic if not properly controlled. In recent years, there have been serious outbreaks of black pod disease that have considerably reduced cocoa yields. Seedlings have also become very expensive. In early 1997, oil palm seedlings retailed for ₺2,600. The outlay required for seedlings to establish a five-acre oil palm plantation is close to ₺1 million. The divestiture of agricultural supply services also results in farmers having to travel far to acquire inputs and having to pay high costs for transportation.

The economy has been characterised by very high rates of inflation and currency devaluation. Between 1983 and early 1997, the currency has been devalued by 160 per cent. Interest rates are over 40 per cent, making it diffi-

cult for farmers to make profits on loans and to gain loans in a high risk market. The risks associated with agriculture due to vagaries of weather, market price insecurity and the lack of a risk insurance market, and the growing costs of production increasingly erode any sense of security in farming. Imports of certain food crops, such as rice from Southeast Asia, erode the prices of locally produced crops and undermine local production.

Contrary to the prescriptions of Bates (1982), price reforms have had little impact on crop productivity since it has become apparent that other factors outside state policy have important effects on agricultural commodity markets. These include the vagaries of weather, access to transport and marketing facilities, costs of inputs and labour and poor international market prices for tropical agricultural commodities during the 1980s and 1990s. Traders often exert monopolies over the marketing of food crops, since farmers do not have access to cheap transport, which is the preserve of the large traders who hire or own large lorries. Farmers are weakly organised and lack cooperative marketing societies that can circumvent intermediate traders. Prices vary considerably during the year, with a marked seasonal increase in food prices during the lean season from February until the new harvest in June/July. Poorer farmers are forced to sell at harvest time to meet their needs for cash, when prices are at their lowest. With perishable crops, traders can pay low prices in the harvest season, knowing that if farmers hold out their crops will rot. The collapse in farmgate prices is more pronounced during years of bountiful harvest and good rain. This results in low farm profits and low incentives to expand production in subsequent years (ISSER, 1996:81). These fundamental characteristics of food markets are not addressed by structural adjustment. However, spiralling costs of inputs, seeds, commodities, labour and high rates of inflation, increase the costs of production. In the context of the risk involved in rain-fed agriculture, this increases the financial burdens and insecurity of farming and results in increased impoverishment in poor harvest years.

The reform programme does not address the specific needs of small farmers. It also does not significantly address the needs of indigenous capitalist agriculture. Agricultural liberalisation does not aim to foster the development of farm-level agricultural capitalist production, but rather to cut back on the state's subsidisation and financial support for this class (Gibbon *et. al.*, 1993). However, it creates a framework which promotes international capital investment in the agricultural sector by facilitating the movement of international capital into unprotected markets. In Ghana, it builds upon the developments that occurred during the Acheampong regime, in which the state moved away from support of indigenous capitalist agriculture to creating conditions for the promotion of agribusiness and joint ventures between international capital and the state. In the 1970s, these overtures

received a mixed reception from foreign capital which was concerned about the terms dictated by the state and the difficulty of repatriating profits. However, the changes brought about by structural adjustment in the 1980s facilitated a programme of institutional restructuring to create a favourable environment for international capital to dictate the terms of economic management.

In this context, agricultural divestiture is not essentially about the transfer of state farms to private farmers, but the gradual transformation of state agricultural research services into integrated units that can be subsumed under international agribusiness, or which create the space to facilitate the growth of international agribusiness. Thus, pilot contract farming ventures, such as the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation, have been privatised and international capital has bought into these ventures. These ventures are often developed as partnerships with local venture capital. The local firms are the junior partners, responsible for implementing management directives at the national level that are often developed as part of a global management strategy spanning several countries. The local partners provide knowledge of the cultural and institutional context. In the past indigenous agricultural capitalists were granted subsidies by the state: the tax holidays, concessionary tariffs, and "favourable policy environment" that are used to court international capital can be seen as a variant of subsidisation.

Significantly, in agricultural development policy much attention is now given to the linkages from farmgate to international markets, and many firms are now moving into marketing and providing loans, seeds, information and extension advice to farmers as part of the advance purchase package. A recent article in *Spore* (February 1996, no 61:1-4) entitled *New Market Opportunities for Enterprising Farmers* underlines these developments:

The classical view of agriculture is that it centres on the farmer and that farming is a relatively simple and predictable process. This does not take sufficient account of the reality that farming is but one activity of many that forms the link of a chain starting with research and input supply to marketing produce, processing and ultimate sale to consumers. Policy makers, planners and donors have not given sufficient consideration to the need to do more than support farmers. If farmers are to develop then the people on whom they depend, such as research scientists, input manufacturers and suppliers, traders and agro-processors must also be helped to develop in concert with farmers (p.3).

The article goes on to state that

if farmers are to optimise their share of consumer spending it will be necessary for them to seek ways of building creative alliances with other sectors of the chain and move away from the traditional attitude of confrontation over prices. There is an urgent need for training of producers to understand the relative value of investments, risks and returns in the whole process of producing, processing and

marketing produce ... Developing farmer strategies for market orientation in ACP countries will undoubtedly be a challenge for farmers, policy makers and planners alike. There will be many in the food chain who will need to review and measure their current attitudes against the reality of the market place and take stock before taking the next steps. The rewards of success will be more than a revitalised rural sector emerging from the pain of structural adjustment. It will be no less than a vital step towards the development of more balanced, more sustainable national economies, better able to provide the framework in which individuals and families can seek to fulfil their aspirations (p.4).

This gradual transformation of agriculture is facilitated by the increasing insecurity, cost and risk evident in peasant farming that will serve to make farmers look for relief by way of loans, advances and new institutional set-ups that can provide elements of risk insurance. All of these can be used by agribusiness as levers to incorporate the peasantry into commodity markets that they control or intend to control.

The process of reform and market liberalisation goes well beyond the agricultural sector and creates a situation where all natural resources are now up for sale on the international economy, where all natural and cultural resources can be commoditised from the rural knowledge of medicinal plants, to annual festivals and biodiversity parks for ecotourism. All this means that the land question goes far beyond the development of agrarian farm capital and endogenous land markets. It is now concerned with the penetration of international capital into various agricultural, natural resource and marketing sectors, and the integration of peasant farmers into the chain of the modern agrifood system and other forms of international capital markets.

2. The state, tradition, capital and the land

Concepts of indigenous and endogenous land tenure have become fashionable in recent years. In the Introduction to this work, it was shown how these concepts have developed as central constructs for frameworks advocating the devolution of land administration from central government to “community groups” and “traditional authorities”. But this contemporary fascination with linking “traditional” and “community” values with abstract liberal ideals prevents the emergence of an historical awareness of land relations. Land tenure is treated as some essentialist cultural element existing outside time that defines social relations and attitudes to land. Here, it is argued that the concept of the “traditional” has itself been defined, redefined and invented by the colonial and state. This invented traditional sector has been incorporated into the state as an arm of rural administration. The concept of tradition is a mask for modern commodity production. It is worn to shroud class and economic interest. It creates an ideology of rural cultural and political integration that is used to regulate and define control over land and natural resources in the interests of the alliance between the dominant classes and fractions within the state and world capital. The aim of this chapter is to tear away this mask of cultural traditionalism to reveal the inner workings of the land tenure system in relation to the state and commodity markets. It places concepts and debates about land in a political economy framework and traces the evolution of socioeconomic interests and ideological frameworks from the colonial period to the era of structural adjustment.

Ranger (1983) has argued that with the consolidation of colonial rule and the establishment of a system of indirect rule based on Native Authorities, power was transferred from communities to appointed chiefs who were also expected to be the custodians of tradition. In place of the flexible negotiated arrangements of the past, the customary became codified into a series of fixed rules and laws based on British inventions of tradition. These tended to freeze rural society into a series of identities that served the interests of colonial rule but prevented the further evolution of social institutions despite conditions of rapid social transformation.

Berry (1993) has further developed this concept of *invented tradition* in the context of the land question. While accepting that colonialism created a new conception of tradition that did not reflect past historical relations, she questions the extent to which colonial authorities froze African society in a

timeless world of tradition and custom. Berry (1993:39–40) argues that colonial policy

did not block the commercialisation of agricultural production and resource mobilisation in Africa, but did shape the way in which rights of access to land and labour were defined and transacted, and the way people used resources to establish and defend rights of access. Under indirect rule, colonial regimes incorporated ongoing struggles over power and social identity into the structure of colonial administration, and elicited confusing testimonies from their African subjects concerning the meaning of “native law and custom”. As a result property rights and labour relations were neither transformed according to the English model nor frozen in anachronistic “communal” forms, but instead became subjects of perpetual contest. Under indirect rule, British officials sought to make rights of access contingent on people’s social identity. At the same time, Africans sought to negotiate new social identities in order take advantage of commercial or political opportunities. The combined result was a series of ongoing debates about how rules of access were linked to social identities and vice versa.

Berry contends that land tenure constitutes a contested terrain in which actors are constantly attempting to redefine what constitutes customary rights for their own benefit. Therefore, land tenure must be examined as a process that is always being renegotiated through manipulating social networks of patronage. This paradigm has the merit of bringing into the picture of invented tradition the concepts of the colonial subjects, and the problems they faced in reconstructing the past and giving it meaning in a period of transformation and flux brought about by alien domination. In the complex reality of the colonial world, the attempts of the subjugated to understand the relevance of their culture and traditions must have had an important impact in defining the evolution of customary laws. Invented traditions can only be based on pre-existing conceptions. They can create new terms of reference and contexts but not the cultural baggage.

However, Berry’s emphasis on process above structure results in an overestimation of the ability of people to influence the debate about what constitutes tradition and to lay down the norms for contemporary access to resources. In reality, it is only the wealthy and powerful who can engage in these debates and who can make the necessary investments in “social networks” that Berry focuses on. The majority of people are merely forced to abide by interpretations of what is determined to be customary by the powerful, or to operate outside legality. Thus, processes need to be rooted in structures of social differentiation and class. As Mamdani (1996:118) writes,

both those with claims and without claims in the old order sought to establish claims in the new one. The onset of colonial rule combined with new conditions—increased mobility and increased stratification—to generate new and contradictory claims. Not surprisingly, every claim presented itself as customary, and there could be no neutral arbiter. The substantive customary law was neither

a kind of historical and cultural residue carried like excess baggage by groups resistant to “modernisation” nor a pure colonial “invention” or “fabrication”, arbitrarily manufactured without regard to any historical backdrop and contemporary realities. Instead it was reproduced through an ongoing series of confrontations between claimants with a shared history but not always the same notions of it. And yet—and this is the important point—the presumption that there was a single and undisputed notion of the customary, unchanging and implicit, one that people knew as they did their mother tongue, meant that those without access to the Native Authority had neither the same opportunity nor political resource to press home their point of view. In the absence of recognition that conflicting views of the customary existed, even the question that they be represented could not arise.

The land question needs to be analysed in the context of the interactions between process and structure, through examining the ways in which the process of defining land rights unravels within a given social structure. The focus in this chapter is on the role of the state in defining land tenure and the alliances it forms with capital, social classes and groups around the land question.

Land rights in Ghana have been defined by interactions in three different arenas: customary land law, the concession system and legislation in the law courts. Customary law defines the rights and lack of rights of the peasantry in land; the concession system defines the rights of capital; and legislation defines and redefines the changing context of rights and interests in land in accordance with “the needs of development and progress”, without disturbing the ideological conception of the timelessness of tradition. It is argued that considerable change has been brought about this century without disturbing ideological conceptions of tradition, since the basis of this tradition is constructed on a system of multiple land rights that affords the peasantry only a lack of security in land. The roots of this system lie in an alliance between chiefs and the state as the basis of rural administration and control over land.

The land question can only be understood historically since much of the ideological baggage surrounding land was laid down in the early colonial period. This can only be unpacked by understanding the processes surrounding the penetration of capital that came to define the land question and the relationship between the colonial and state.

Codifying land law

The first exercise in codifying customary land law was in the 1890s. The essential problem for colonial administration was that the economic structure of the Gold Coast had developed prior to formal colonial annexation, under the structures of a protectorate, and the administration had little

control over this economic base. A major concern of the colonial administration was to gain control over the land of the hinterland which would enable it to regulate the agricultural, mining and forestry sectors.

Transactions in agricultural land grew in the early nineteenth century among the Krobo in the Lower Volta area in response to growth of a large export market for palm oil as a raw material in industrial processing. The neighbouring Akuapem people were to follow suit in purchasing land from Akyem Abuakwa and this process intensified from the 1890s as cocoa began to replace palm oil as the major export and spread rapidly through the forest zone as a major cash crop (Amanor, 1994; Hill, 1963).

On the Gold Coast, the 1890s was an era of intense speculation in gold. This fuelled the movement towards colonial annexation, and fears about Asante selling its mineral rights to France led to the campaign to subjugate Asante in 1895. As Fox Bourne (1901:41) comments on the British campaign against Asante,

one of the main motives of the expedition of 1895, not admitted till after its conclusion was, of course, command of the minerals in which the interior of the Gold Coast is supposed to abound. Before the troops had returned from Kumasi, in fact, several speculators had begun arrangements with local chiefs and others, with the objective of obtaining valuable concessions at low prices.

The largest concession negotiated in this period was a written agreement between E.A. Cade and some Gold Coast concessionaire brokers for 100 square miles of land in Adanse and Bekwae in 1895. This became the site for Ashanti Goldfields. In the gold boom of the 1890s, more than 400 mining companies were established on the Gold Coast and vast tracts of the forest were acquired as concessions (Howard, 1978; Kimble, 1963).

This rapid commoditisation of land was of great concern to the colonial authority since it had no control over the process and, as a result, little chance to regulate the expansion of capital and to maximise government revenues from this process. In 1894, the colonial government of the Gold Coast attempted to introduce the Crown Lands Bill. This legislation vested "waste land, forest land and minerals" in the British Crown, which then would have the rights to grant concessions to international capital on unoccupied land. Members of families and stools would still have the right to use land for cultivation, but they would have no rights to grant lands to strangers, particularly European capitalist investors. The major aim of this was to gain control over the mineral and timber wealth of the interior. This was reflected in debates among colonial officers on the form land legislation should take. For instance, the chief justice, J.T. Hutchinson, argued that "waste land" need not be vested in the Crown, but that the Crown should

take possession of minerals and unoccupied forest areas for timber (Kimble, 1963).

The Crown Lands Bill met with considerable opposition from the Gold Coast intelligentsia who argued that there was no waste land within the colony, that all lands had owners, and that the Crown had no legal authority to appropriate lands. Since the Gold Coast Protectorate had not been established by conquest or by treaty, they argued that the Colonial Government had no right to vest land in the Crown (Casely Hayford, 1903). The Gold Coast Protectorate (excluding Ashanti and the Northern Territories) was in the unique situation of having been established before the rise of imperial conquest, in the early nineteenth century. It developed as an alliance of African states with British and Danish interests that had arisen in opposition to Asante domination and was committed to the ideology of free trade. It was essentially an African state with European administrators.

In the face of mounting problems with its formulation, the Crown Lands Bill was rescinded in 1895. In 1897 it was replaced by the Lands Bill. This dropped mention of waste land and gave the colonial government rights of administration over "public land". The chiefs were recognised as having rights to the land and could grant land to other Africans, but not to Europeans. The granting of concessions to Europeans could only be undertaken by government using its powers of administration. The government was also authorised to grant public land which had no owner. Africans only had "settlers' rights" of occupation. Permanent heritable rights of occupancy could only be granted by the government through a "land certificate", which gave rights to the owner to transmit property according to English Law (Kimble, 1963; Graham, 1993). These laws were intended to ensure that concessionaires could get firm title to land and that government could regulate concessions.

The Lands Bill provoked strong opposition on the Gold Coast and led to the formation of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS), which sought to protect the interests of the chiefs and people of the Gold Coast. The ARPS marshalled a powerful case built on a peculiar admixture of the British legal perspectives that informed the interpretation of customary land law, and the perspectives of chiefs and the intelligentsia. They sent a delegation to London to petition the Colonial Office. They argued that the Lands Bill was a violation of the political position of the Gold Coast as a protectorate and threatened traditional land tenure and undermined traditional authority. As Mensah Sarbah stated in *Fanti Customary Law* (1897:55–6):

The King, by the law of England, is the supreme lord of the whole soil. Whoever, therefore, holds lands must hold them mediately or immediately of him; and while the subject enjoys the usufructuary possession, the absolute and ultimate dominion remains in the King. As far as the Gold Coast is concerned, this portion

of the English law does not apply, for it is a group of territories under native rulers taken under British Protection. It is British territory, but not so by conquest or cessions; as a matter of fact, the Colonial Office stated on the 11th day of March, 1887, as published in Parliamentary Blue Book of that year, that it is inaccurate to state that after the successful Ashanti expedition of 1874 the Protectorate was annexed by Great Britain and became a colony, inasmuch as the greater portion of the Gold Coast Colony remains a Protectorate, the soil being in the hands of the natives, and under the jurisdiction of the native chiefs. According to native ideas, there is no land without owners. What is now a forest or unused land will, as years go on, come under cultivation by the subjects of the stool or members of the village community, or other members of the community.

The land question was closely associated with the national question and Gold Coast nationalists of the period viewed colonial land legislation as a violation of their national rights. Thus, members of the ARPS—who essentially represented the national merchant bourgeoisie and the professions—not only opposed colonial land legislation but also attempted to define a more national democratic political structure. This case was eloquently presented in Casely Hayford's (1903) *Gold Coast Native Institution*. In this work, he attempts to codify a political tradition which was threatened by British colonialism. He argues that the political institutions of the Gold Coast are essentially democratic and should form the basis for the "imperialisation of the Gold Coast and Ashanti on purely aboriginal lines":

If you are free to admit it you will see that you find here already a system of self-government as perfect and efficient as the most forward nations of the earth to-day can possibly conceive. A people who could, ingeniously, and without a literature, evolve the orderly representative government which obtained in Ashanti and the Gold Coast before the advent of the foreign interloper, are a people to be respected and shown consideration when they proceed to discuss questions of self-government (Casely Hayford: 1903:128–9).

The basis of this system is seen as resting on chiefly authority:

To restore, then the original municipal institutions of the people is the surest way to popularise the principal of municipal government on the Gold Coast. And you cannot do this unless you give full sway to the working of the Native State System by candidly recognising the authority of the Kings and Chiefs, strengthening their influence, and working through them. Barring cases of gross injustice there should be as little interference as possible in internal native government of the Provinces. When once you have adopted this policy, under the direction of a well-informed central government, firm but conciliatory, you have gone a great way in solving the problem of Gold Coast administration. For you will easily perceive that in this question of municipal government, unless the native Authorities have the power to enforce the necessary regulations, backed by their ancient prestige, there can be no progress possible (Casely Hayford, 1903:114).

In this system, the national bourgeois intelligentsia was seen as the element best able to develop the institutional forms of this democracy, interpret

traditional political institutions and act as brokers between traditional rulers and the colonial authority: "Indeed the very difficulties which beset the path of the British Administration can be correctly indicated sometimes only by the intelligent ones of the country, and the method, if not the means, of solution must also be with them" (Casely Hayford, 1903:3).

In carrying out this exercise of codifying a tradition threatened by colonial domination the Gold Coast intelligentsia was attempting to define a role for itself in colonial administration in a period in which its representation was being seriously eroded. During the early nineteenth century, the emergent national bourgeoisie had played an important part in the administration of the Gold Coast Protectorate, and occupied prominent positions such as lieutenant-governor, colonial secretary, collector of customs, and justices of peace. With imperialism replacing free trade as the ideology of capitalist expansion, all Gold Coast citizens were removed from high positions of authority.

However, in attempting to codify a national democratic tradition, the Gold Coast intelligentsia were in danger of inventing or freezing a timeless tradition around an idealised position of the chief, precisely at a time of rapid social transformation. Thus, in his work, Casely Hayford failed to take into consideration the significant changes taking place in the Eastern Region as a result of the expansion of the oil palm and cocoa industries and the ensuing commoditisation of land, or the implications of the mining sector and the emergence of a wage labour for the Native State System he expounded.

Many of the leading members of the ARPS had interests in concessions, either as contractors and brokers of concessions or as concession lawyers. In its contemptuous dismissal of the ARPS, the colonial government never tired of bringing out these facts (Kimble, 1963). In enacting new land legislation, the colonial government was not only attempting to gain control over the process of commoditisation of land, but also frustrating the development of a national bourgeoisie with economic control over land and interests in land speculation. This was fully realised by the Gold Coast merchants in their initial response to colonial land legislation. As James Brew commented,

Am I to understand that I have not the power to dispose, in any way, of any landed property, being freehold, owned by me in the Gold Coast Colony, whether by granting a concession for the same, or leasing the same, or otherwise, as I may deem fit, without the sanction and approval of the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony?¹

¹. James H. Brew to Colonial Office, 6 February 1896, Despatch 3070, no.60, CO 879/46, quoted in Howard (1978:41).

The emergent Gold Coast national bourgeoisie was concerned with protecting both its rights of unimpeded access to land and to engage in the commercial transaction of land. It sought to articulate these demands for national land rights in terms of the sanctity of tradition. This concept of “national” and “traditional” land rights, however, reflected the interests and perspectives of the large landowners and chiefs.

The Lands Bill was also opposed by British capitalist interests on the Gold Coast, who were concerned that government intervention would result in increasing extraction of royalties and taxes and the imposition of regulations. Their case was taken up by the chambers of commerce of London, Liverpool and Manchester which argued that private capital was the main agency of development and government intervention was making the Gold Coast unprofitable for investment and would retard progress (Kimble, 1963).

In 1898 the Lands Bill was rescinded. This was not so much the result of the colonial state bowing to opposition, but reflected a clarification of British policy on the Gold Coast. The basis of colonial policy was to be indirect rule—that colonial government should rule through existing authorities who should be responsible for rural administration. The Lands Bill was seen as undermining the authority of chiefs. Furthermore, colonial policy recognised that in British West Africa the agricultural sector would be dominated by small peasant production rather than a class of settler colonists. Thus, a policy which held and controlled agricultural land for capitalist development was unnecessary. The major focus of land policy needed to be on control over mining and timber concessions.

The potential economic significance of the Crown Lands Bill and the Lands Bill can be gleaned by examining other British colonies in Africa with a British settler population in which similar legislation was introduced. In Kenya, the 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance established a situation in which there existed unoccupied Crown Land and occupied Native Trust Land. The Crown Lands could be made available to European settlers as deemed necessary by the colonial government. Through this policy, the most fertile Highlands area was expropriated for British farmers (Kiamba, 1989). Similarly in Nyasaland (Malawi) the Crown Lands coincided with the best agricultural lands and those rich in minerals (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1982). While such laws were designed to transfer prime economic resources to British investors and agricultural settlers, official justification for their enactment was the protection of Africans from being exploited by European private capital. In reality, the ideological concept of vacant and unoccupied land enabled large areas of prime land to be expropriated by colonial interests (Platteau, 1992).

On the Gold Coast colonial land policy was eventually defined by the 1900 Concessions Ordinance. This provided for special tribunals of the supreme court to be established for validating and regulating the granting of

concessions. It also regulated the size and duration of concessions, in order to prevent land being tied up in the hands of those unable to work it or by land speculators. The 1900 Concessions Ordinance was largely concerned with regulating security of title of concessions and regulating the granting of concessions so that government could extract royalties.

In 1910 the colonial government once again attempted to establish powers to alienate land for the establishment of forest reserves. This time the argument focused on environmental issues: the need to protect forests against large-scale clearing to maintain the climate of the forest zone and watersheds, and the need to protect forest resources against overexploitation. In 1909, a Forestry Department was created. The Forest Bill sought to empower the colonial government to set up forest reserves on "waste and unoccupied land" through compulsory acquisition. This was strongly opposed by the ARPS as an attempt to reintroduce the Land Bill through the backdoor. As a result, the legislation was quickly withdrawn and reformulated as the 1911 Forest Bill. The new Forest Bill emphasised that ownership of forest reserves was not to change and that the Forestry Department would manage them on behalf of the landowning chiefs. The Forestry Department could grant concessions on these forest reserves and two-fifths of any profits made were to go to the owners and the remaining three-fifths were to be retained by the Forestry Department for administrative purposes. This did not appease the Gold Coast nationalists and in the face of growing opposition, a special commission was set up to investigate land tenure on the Gold Coast (The Belfield Report, 1912).

This commission recommended that the government should not be permitted to lease out forest reserve land, but only to employ the land for its own use. It further recommended that the government should only retain as much of the revenues realised as were needed to cover administrative costs and that the remaining revenues should be released to the landowners. As a result of opposition, the Forest Bill was never implemented and it was not until 1927 that a new Forest Ordinance was enacted. This maintained the rights of ownership of chiefs over forest reserves and gave the Forestry Department the role of supervising and managing reserves on a behalf of the landowners. The chiefs could alienate land for forest reserves by enacting bylaws. The chiefs had the right to grant concessions to work minerals and timber within the reserves and the Forestry Department could use one-third of the collected revenues for the improvement of the reserves. This legislation depended on the government working closely with the chiefs. Chiefs had incentives to constitute forest reserves, since they could gain valuable revenues from royalties which would be lost if local citizens took up the land for farming purposes.

If there was a convergence between the philosophical outlook of the colonial government and the Gold Coast national intelligentsia as regards the concept and role of tradition, the colonial government rejected the pleas of the intelligentsia for a position in government as a broker between the modern and traditional sectors. It sought to outflank the intelligentsia by becoming the custodian of tradition through an alliance with the chiefs. Colonial anthropologists were recruited to provide the ideological framework for this structure of Native Authorities based on tradition, and to supplant the political writings of Gold Coast nationalists on African social and political systems. The colonial anthropologists were considered by the colonial administration (and considered themselves) as better able than the educated African to gain the "complete confidence" of the "illiterate" Africans who had the "requisite knowledge" of "what the past really was" (Rattray¹, 1929: p.vi.).

Colonial rule was deeply conservative. Its concerns with protecting and conserving traditions were intended to frustrate and retard the development of indigenous capitalism and the emergence of a national capitalist class. This conservatism is revealed in the work of Cardinall (1931:75), the Gold Coast census officer.

One of the most prominent features of the history of this country has been its persistent advances in cultural progress by leaps rather than the process of gradual and continuous evolution. Since the beginning of the twentieth century these leaps have become even more exaggerated and the past decade had witnessed a rate of progress which might even be considered dangerous ... It is probable that the nation is advancing faster than may seem good to Government who actually have the occasion to act as a brake rather than an accelerating force.

Similar concerns in the Nigerian setting can be found in Forde's (1939) study of problems of local administration under indirect rule:

The strength of the kinship organisation has already been weakened to some extent, for the development of external trading has provided opportunities for enterprising and self-reliant but selfish persons to evade obligations to their kinsmen. Men who devote their entire time to trading, are tending to become socially as well as economically divorced from the community and to acquire an independent and commercial outlook ... Serious weakening of the kinship structure would undoubtedly increase the tendency towards economic individualism (p.153).

The frustration the policy of indirect rule created is reflected in a report by the commissioner of the Western Region, in which he states that, "Everywhere is to be found a spirit of impatience and intolerance among the younger men. The latter, with a mere smattering of education, resent and

¹. Rattray was the first colonial anthropologist appointed in the Gold Coast.

impede the authority of the Chief and elder men, few of whom can either read or write" (Gold Coast Departmental Reports, Western Region, 1921, quoted in Kimble, 1963).

The development of Native Authorities had two significant impacts on agricultural production. It gave chiefs monopoly control over land and the process of land sales in export-crop producing regions and it established a rule of compulsion through which free labour could be extracted from their subjects. This enabled the colonial authority, through its agent the chief, to exert some control over the process of export crop production and over the movement of large numbers of migrant farmers into new districts, which threatened to erode the basis of Native Authorities and customary rule. Land and cocoa became important sources of revenue for chiefs, both through sale and through control over production. As Field (1948:7) comments:

The new income from mines and land sales means that the land, originally valueless to the *oman* [local state] and quite independent of it, has become *linked* to the *oman*. The *oman* does not control or own it, but has acquired a very acute interest (in the nonlegal sense) in it.

In the early phase of cocoa development the cocoa industry was largely characterised by commodity relations: cocoa farmers purchased land and hired labour (Hill, 1963). In the pioneer Akuapem migrant cocoa-farming area in New Suhum, the dominant form of hired labour was the *nkotokoano* system. The cocoa farmer paid the labourer a fixed sum for every bag of cocoa harvested (Hill, 1956). In the initial phase of cocoa development, the large cocoa farmers were frequently prosperous merchants looking for new fields of investment (Hill, 1963). Macmillan (1940:82) commented:

From the very beginning the backbone of the Gold Coast cocoa industry has been not the simple tribal peasant, but in the real sense a "middle class" of traders and entrepreneurs. The dominant even if absentee owners of cocoa-farms are still men from the coastal towns.

In the 1920s and 1930s, with the consolidation of the system of Native Authorities, cocoa production became dominated by sharecropping relations, which increasingly replaced land purchase and labour hire (Austin, 1987). The sharecrop tenant was usually a migrant, since citizens of district states had rights of free access to land within the state. The dominant form of sharecropping was the *abusa* system, in which the tenant created a new farm in mature forest and gave the landlord one-third of the yield as rent or one-third of the established plantation (Hill, 1956; Ollenu, 1967; Asante, 1975). In contrast to the Akyem area, Ashanti chiefs did not sell land but rented it. During the 1920s, migrant farmers were charged one penny for every cocoa tree they planted or a fixed amount of rent according to the size of the farm (Matson, no date). However, by the 1930s monetary rents were increasingly

replaced by the *abusa* system. Austin (1987) has argued that in the Amansie and Bekwae districts of Ashanti, regular wage labour was prevalent in the 1920s and was only replaced by *abusa* during the 1930s. Thus, as indirect rule matured and chiefs gained greater powers in land administration, they were able to use land to gain access to migrant labour and transform themselves from land sellers into major cocoa landowners.

The social relations of production that came to define the cocoa industry were founded on adaptations of pre-capitalist relations of dependency, based on corvee-type relations, to a growing market economy. Chiefs were able to exert their political authority to regulate the process of market expansion, to bring export crop production under their political control through appeal to tradition and customary rights over land, and to gain economic interests in export crop production. Through appeal to "traditional right" they were able to appropriate land to establish their own plantations and gain access to communal labour from their subjects to develop their plantations. In the Northern Territories, the main labour reserves in the colony, the chiefs were responsible for recruiting and organising young men as migrant labourers for the south. They were absorbed both into the expatriate-controlled mining sector and the chiefly-landowner-controlled cocoa sector. A system of taxation was later introduced into the north which forced seasonal migration to the south to gain money for tax payments (Konings, 1986). Capital accumulation in the cocoa sector was achieved by a mixture of market expansion and political compulsion backed by appeal to the traditional rights of the landowning chiefly class (Mamdani, 1996). Two dominant classes emerged in the cocoa industry: merchant-farmers who invested the capital accumulated in trade and agriculture in cocoa land, and the landowning chiefly classes who could control land and labour.

Relations of production in the cocoa industry

The conservatism of colonial policy was reflected in the socioeconomic characteristics of the cocoa industry. The dominant form of production was small peasant production and few attempts were made to establish large-scale industrial plantations. The industry was dominated by a few expatriate merchant capitalist firms which controlled the export of the crop and which hired African brokers for bulking the crop from the rural areas. Independent African merchants were rare and most merchants were contracted to oligopolistic European firms.

Competition was intense and most merchants engaged in forward buying. The cocoa merchants would advance peasant farmers a sum of money, usually during the lean season when scarcity prevailed. This would be repaid in cocoa at the harvest season. The loan given was valued at half

the price of the estimated cocoa yield at prevailing market prices. The lender assumed the risk of the market price falling but also retained the benefit of a rise in price. Merchants could often expect to make a profit of more than 100 per cent in between two and nine months of the loan being granted. Surveys of indebtedness of farmers carried out between 1932 and 1957 illustrate the prevalence of usurers' capital, with between 25 and 75 per cent of farmers pledging part of their crop against advances (Shephard, 1936; Nowell Commission, 1938; Ghana Ministry of Agriculture, 1957). Usurers' capital and indebtedness were characteristic features of the industry, which served to assure African brokers of a large supply of cheap cocoa. However, the capital engaged in forward-buying originated in the European firms that advanced capital to the main brokers for upcountry purchases of cocoa. Brokers were also paid a commission and a retaining fee. They in turn commissioned and advanced capital to sub-brokers to collect cocoa from particular districts. Thus, the chain of usurers' capital originated with colonial mercantile firms. By the 1930s, 98 per cent of cocoa shipped from the Gold Coast was controlled by thirteen European companies.

The main profits in the cocoa industry were in trading and the most successful farmers were trader-farmers who, through ties of indebtedness with small farmers, controlled a large marketing output from which they realised their main profits. During the 1920s and 1930s, a major concern of these trader-farmers was to form associations and joint stock companies for the marketing of cocoa, such as Krobo Plantations Ltd., West African Cooperative Produce Ltd., West African Credit Association, Gold Coast and Ashanti Cocoa Federation Ltd., Akyem Abuakwa Cocoa Federation, Agricultural Improvement Society, etc. The pioneering cocoa marketing association was the Densu and Agya Planters' Association that was founded in 1921 in Akuapem. This grew into the Gold Coast Farmers' Association in 1922, which arose from early attempts to organise a cocoa boycott to force up buying prices. It had the aim of joint-marketing the cocoa of its members, holding out against low prices, and shipping cocoa directly to Europe and the US (Holmes, 1972). The agricultural department also formed its own marketing department in the form of the Cooperative Farmers' Societies, which sought to establish credit for farmers in return for marketing their cocoa. It developed propaganda against rapacious brokers and an image of the Cooperative Societies as helping farmers to "win back their freedom" against the "fear of the auctioneer's hammer" by "teaching the value of thrift" and through making loans available to cooperative farmers (Gold Coast Farmer, 1932: p.97).

Social tensions

In the early colonial period the main social tensions in the cocoa sector revolved around the alliance of broker-farmers and farmers organising against the perceived oligopolistic tendencies of the expatriate mercantile firms. This culminated in the 1937/38 Cocoa Hold-Up in which farmers organised a boycott against the selling of cocoa to European firms. This resulted in the setting up of a Commission of Enquiry into the Marketing of West African Cocoa (Nowell Commission, 1938). The recommendations of the commission resulted in the eventual establishment of a state monopoly cocoa marketing board. From 1948 until recent times, the marketing of cocoa has been carried out by the state, which sets producer prices and appropriates rentier capital from the differential between farmgate and international prices for cocoa. These developments have eroded the operation of usurer and merchant capital within the cocoa sector. The large farmer-traders have moved out of the cocoa sector into other spheres of investment. With a monopoly over cocoa marketing, the state does not have to engage in forward buying or gain cheap pledged cocoa. It realises its profits by setting cheap producer prices. In recent years, the internal upcountry marketing in cocoa has been privatised, but international trade is still controlled by the state. However, there are pressures from donors to privatise the international marketing of cocoa.

A second social tension that emerged in the colonial period was between chiefs, with their new administrative powers as agents of colonial rule, and commoners. The main grievances arose from the power of chiefs to engage forced labour for "community development" and for work on their plantations, and their powers to sell land and appropriate stool lands for their own cocoa plantations and for the creation of forest reserves. Since colonial hostility towards the indigenous development of capitalism was expressed in terms of the threat to "traditional rule", nationalist opposition to the system of Native Authorities was expressed as hostility to chiefs. The hostility was expressed in two forms:

- numerous attempts by commoner organisations (such as *asafu* societies) to "destool" or remove chiefs from office for maladministration and corruption (Simensen 1975; Danquah, 1928);
- the expression of anti-chief sentiment in the radical wing of the nationalist movement, which crystallised into the Convention People's Party (CPP) under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah (Harvey, 1966; Kimble, 1963).

Paradoxically, many chiefs were highly active in the Cocoa Hold-Up, imposing sanctions on farmers who wished to give in and sell their cocoa because of hardship. This reflected their economic interests in cocoa.

An associated third social tension emerged among an aspiring urban and rural bourgeoisie looking towards the future, but hampered by a backward-looking social milieu and legal framework that obstinately held to concepts of community solidarity that had been frozen for more than 50 years, despite social and economic transformation. Asante (1975) cites the case of a legal ruling that was affirmed by the West African Court of Appeal in 1952, which compelled an individual collecting rent from land to hand the land over to the community because land was communally held. This precedent was established by citing a ruling on indigenous land tenure by Rayner at the turn of the century. This was summed up thus:

There can be no quarrel with the statement of customary tenure. As a general principle it has been applied in numerous cases and in postulating, as the learned judge did, that land belongs to the community and in deciding in this case, that it belonged to the Nze community, he was not departing from the principles of Native Customary Tenure (Asante, 1975:47).

Asante (1975:47) comments:

This declaration is remarkable for two things. First, it demonstrates the tenacity with which the Superior Court clung to concepts of communal ownership of land as the first postulate of customary land law, notwithstanding the momentous economic and social changes which occurred in the fifty years following Rayner's report. Secondly, it discloses the essentially *a priori* approach of the courts; a judge first proceeds by postulating that land belongs to the community and then applying the postulate to the case before him.

By the 1950s, this tenacity looked jaded and faintly ridiculous. Indirect rule stood in the post-war period like an embarrassing anachronism that could only be relieved through decolonisation.

Post-war restructuring: land in the setting

By the late 1940s, as the process of decolonisation came into play in a world in which British imperialism had declined and the US had emerged as the most powerful nation state in the world, it was widely recognised that indirect rule and the system of Native Authorities needed radical upheaval. The Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances on the Gold Coast (The Watson Commission, 1948) could not "envisage the growth of commercialisation on the Gold Coast with the retention of native institutions, save in a form which is a pale historical reflection of the past" (p.25). In 1949, the Coussey Committee on Constitutional Reform recommended a clear separation of traditional state councils from local authorities. It suggested that one-third of the representation on local authorities be appointed directly by traditional councils. This was implemented in the 1951 Local Government Ordinance, and then reduced to one-sixth by the 1953 Municipal Councils Ordinance.

nance. In 1959, chiefs were excluded from assuming representation on local councils, which were wholly elected organs. By the 1960s, local government had been completely restructured. In place of native authorities, administration was reorganised into 65 urban and local councils with elected members supervised by a regional commissioner appointed by the government. The role of the chiefs was now limited to concerns with the election of chiefs, stool property and customary law, which were regulated by regional houses of chiefs. As Harvey (1966:104) comments: "through a complex evolution of legislature and executive action, the council of chiefs have, in fact, been stripped of their traditional status and made the limited instrument of a new national state."

This decline in the power of chiefs was related to the triumph of the CPP, the radical wing of the nationalist movement. The role of chiefs in colonial rule, as an agent of colonial administration and as a force frustrating the development of rural capitalism, led to their growing unpopularity at the time of the attainment of independence. Farmers were also aggrieved by the land rents that had been introduced by chiefs, the appropriation of land by the stools for the development of cocoa farms with *abusa* tenants, and the appropriation of stool revenues by chiefs (Ninsin, 1989). The declining popularity of chiefs in the decolonisation phase is captured by Amamoo (1958:99):

[M]any people were beginning by the end of 1950 to associate the chiefs with British rule. The situation was worsened by the rather too close friendship between some of the chiefs and the British officers, by a statement from Nkrumah to the effect that reactionary and other chiefs who refused to move with the people would be destooled, and by the spasmodic waves of "destoolment" of chiefs which swept the country between the period 1949 to 1952. The chiefs, therefore, felt their position was at stake; and their institutions in danger of being abolished.

The opposition of some of the most powerful and influential chiefs to the CPP and their support for the rival National Liberation Movement (NLM) intensified the hostility of the CPP towards the chiefs and resulted in legislation which sought to weaken their economic and political base. The two most vocal supporters of the NLM were the *Okyenhene* (paramount chief of Akyem Abuakwa) and the *Asantehene* (paramount chief of Asante). In 1958, legislation was introduced to weaken the power base of the *Okyenhene* and in 1959 of the *Asantehene*. This legislation placed the administration of stool revenues in the hands of a receiver of stool lands revenue. Up to one-third of the revenues collected could be used by the minister of local government. In 1960, this was extended to all traditional authorities in the Stool Lands Act. This allowed the president to declare any stool land vested in the office of the president when it appeared to be in the "public interest". The 1962 Administration of Lands Act vested all lands in the president and the administration of stool revenues came under the authority of central government,

which was empowered to determine the proportion of revenues going to the chiefs.

The 1962 Concessions Act vests all rights in timber and minerals in the office of the president to be held in trust for stools. It enabled the president to cancel any concessions held by “any individual who is not a citizen of Ghana within the meaning of the Ghanaian Nationality Act, 1961 or of any firm” which was not incorporated or registered in Ghana. By appealing to the national interest the CPP government was able to achieve what the colonial government had failed to do—to regulate land independently of the chiefs. However, the chiefs were still recognised as custodians of the land. The state only acted on their behalf and regulated their activities. Thus a radical framework of land reform based on the concept of social justice rather than traditional right was never implemented and the conditions were created for a rapprochement between the state and the chiefs.

The 1962 State Lands Act enabled government to acquire any land in the “public interest” and established the modalities for the process of compulsory acquisition. This has been instrumental in creating the conditions through which the state can expropriate land for state economic ventures and also for the private economic ventures of their business allies. This process of compulsory land acquisition has also resulted in a rapprochement between the state, its business allies and the landowning chiefs. The invented tradition of the rights of chiefs to land plays an important role in the expropriation of land by the state. Through recourse to the ideology of chiefs as the rightful owners of lands and farmers as merely having usufructuary rights of cultivation, vast areas of land have been expropriated through negotiation with chiefs, and to the exclusion of the farmers on these lands. Farmers only needed to be compensated for crops on the land at the time of compulsory acquisition and compensation has frequently been ignored. Thus, the ideological framework for land administration that has evolved in the period involves a concept of the overriding rights of the state to expropriate and disburse land through appeal to “national interest”, “public interest”, and “the interest of development” and of chiefs to sanctify and customise this process of expropriation.

It is interesting to note that the state has itself appropriated much of the symbolism of chiefs, including the state stool, the state sword, the title of *Osaagyefo* taken on by Kwame Nkrumah, etc. National culture is most frequently defined in terms of the traditions of chiefs rather than popular culture. Thus, Arhin (1985:131), the current commissioner for culture and also a chief, writes that chiefs

preserve in the institution of traditional rule the ideas and forms of life that are unique inventions of the people of Ghana, and separate them off from the people. These ideas and the forms in which they are expressed are together known as

culture. Ghana's kind of traditional rule is a cultural idea, and the regalia, dress and ornaments of traditional rulers are forms of cultural expression. Other forms of cultural expression are: the design of the traditional ruler's house; his officials and the manner in which they conduct themselves; the language people speak at the court of the traditional ruler; the kind of drumming, dancing and singing done at the traditional ruler's palace, or when he sits in public, for example, at what are called *durbars*, that is, public assemblies of traditional rulers and their peoples.

The state has taken upon itself a position akin to paramountcy over the land, allowing existing relations to continue and only stepping in to take a share defined as the "national interest". Early measures taken to defend the interests of peasant cultivators, to establish regulations for the renting of agricultural land, rapidly faded away as the intention of bringing the chiefs and land administration under the state was achieved. The engine of land policy has become the needs of the bureaucratic and private capitalist sectors and international trade and investment.

Following the overthrow of the Nkrumah government, subsequent government policies have veered from expropriation of land for the development of state enterprises to expropriation for private capital. During the 1970s, expropriation of land for private capitalist farming reached its zenith with the opening up of large-scale capitalist rice farming in the north and of industrial oil palm plantations in the south (Konings, 1986; Ninsin, 1989; Jonah, 1980; Graham, 1993). Considerable areas of land have been alienated and many farms expropriated, and large concessions have been granted to state farms, private capitalist agriculture and agribusiness (see Chapter 1).

Chiefs have not only been responsible for supporting and authenticating the alienation of land, but have also played roles in assuring local cooperation with state and private capitalist projects. In the north, on the Ve and Tono irrigation projects, the chiefs were responsible for recruiting labour. As Konings (1986:318) comments: "In essence, the post-colonial state has retained the 'colonial' role of the chief ... The post-colonial state has rewarded 'loyal' chiefs in a similar way to its colonial predecessor". The role of chiefs is not only concerned with authenticating the alienation of land, but also with integrating the peasantry into new forms of commodity relations, including encadrement into development projects and contract farming.

At the height of radical nationalism, Harvey (1966:122) expressed the view that: "It is thus difficult to see how chiefs can long remain a significant factor in the social, political or governmental life of the country". In contrast, in the contemporary era chiefs are an important force in rural development. As Arhin (1985:130) comments, "A good traditional ruler is also a good public relations officer, who serves as the 'chief development officer' for his community. He talks to the Government officials in order to draw their attention to the economic and social needs of his people".

The state has left the relations of access to land between the landowning chiefs and the peasantry largely untouched, but it has been concerned with assuring security of title for capitalist farming and for land expropriated from the peasantry. The Land titling Registration Law of 1986 provides for the registration of land to assure proof and certainty of title and to regulate against fraud in purchases. Since the process of registration is not really accessible to the peasantry, this law essentially aims to protect the interests of large-scale capitalist farmers who have purchased land from chiefs or who have purchased or leased land or concessions expropriated from the peasantry.

Globalisation and structural adjustment

By the mid-1970s, nationalisation and the expropriation of land for national capitalists had reached its zenith. Although state and private mechanised capitalist farming had been given much support in loans and favourable access to land, they had failed to solve the problem of national food sufficiency or provide significant revenues for the state. By the mid-1970s, the process of capital accumulation was in crisis as terms of trade turned against primary commodities. The state was burdened with international debt, unable to pay existing debts and unable to attract new loans. Ghanaian capitalists were also burdened by a liquidity crisis. They were unable to renovate capital equipment and often unable to pay wages. As production gradually ground to a halt, the state moved from supporting a clientele of national capitalists to attempting to attract international investments in primary extractive industry and agriculture and joint state and international capital operations. This move was temporarily halted by the populist 4 June 1979 military uprising in which nationalist sentiments were expressed alongside an anti-corruption stance against the patrimonial policies of the NRC/SMC government, which had appropriated capital and national resources for a favoured clientele of political allies.

By 1983, the rapprochement with the IMF and World Bank and the introduction of structural adjustment measures had reset the stage for the promotion of international investment and foreign private capital investments in the productive sectors of Ghana. In the mid-1970s, the state had attempted to promote joint investments with international capital, but it had also attempted to set the conditions. In the mid-1980s and the 1990s the conditions were being set by international capital, the IMF and World Bank. Acceptance of structural adjustment has seen significant international funds invested in Ghana in transport infrastructure and in the mining, forestry and agricultural sectors.

This has had a significant impact on the land question. Increasing investments in land for primary extractive industry and agriculture have resulted in the growing demands by capital for institutional reform to assure security of land titling. Investment has also been conditional on the state privatising parastatal organisations and the lands of these parastatal organisations which were expropriated from communities.

Individual national capitalists have always been encouraged and supported by the Ghanaian state, but Ghanaian capitalist accumulation has been in crisis since the 1970s. It follows from this that privatisation under structural adjustment essentially involves the penetration of foreign capital, rather than private Ghanaian capitalists moving into spheres which the state has been forced to relinquish. This may take the form of the establishment of joint Ghanaian and foreign capital operations in which the foreign component provides capital and management skills and the Ghanaian component provides knowledge of local conditions and brokers the establishment of the local institution. Thus, the divestiture of state-expropriated land usually involves turning over that land to foreign capital. The concept of "national interest" has now been replaced by the "interest of development" and local citizens are advised to cooperate with global capital by releasing land for extractive industry, agriculture and tourism to encourage foreign investment. Chiefs are anxious to release concessions to foreigners for mining, since they are perceived as having lots of money. A new round of concession speculation has opened up harking back to the 1890s and fuelled by the support of international donors for the rehabilitation of the timber and mining sectors.

Attempts to solve the government budgetary crisis through restructuring and devolution have resulted in decentralisation. Decentralisation essentially means that districts are responsible for financing their own development and are responsible for setting up their own development committees. The burdens of the crisis have been put on to the backs of communities who are now responsible for raising their own funds for social infrastructure and amenities, such as schools and health clinics. This is carried out under the guise of "community participation in development". In this process, the power of chiefs has been revamped to encourage them to supervise this process of community development. As Arhin (1985:129-30) comments,

The traditional ruler, the supporters of traditional rule say, still directs community development in the same way as he did when the Colonial Government gave him authority to do so. He is normally respected above everybody else, and is more able than others in getting his people to contribute money or their own labour in building schools, health centres, making roads and constructing markets in the towns and villages. The work of the traditional ruler is important because few districts and local councils have been able to provide these things adequately; and

the Government of Ghana has, since Independence, been concerned more with developing the bigger towns than the smaller towns and villages.

The concept of community participation has many affinities with colonial forced or communal labour. Frequently, "participatory projects" seek to establish participation through appeal to the chiefs to organise the community.

In addition to district assemblies using community participation for provisioning social infrastructure, community participation is increasingly being explored by commercial firms as a mode of developing economic ventures with the support of communities, but without directly employing them. The concept of community participation becomes important as a way of incorporating rural communities into commodity markets and commodity production, in which they participate in the plans of corporations and use their land and labour in ways designed by these companies in the name of development. Chiefs have become important in this process. They not only regulate local land relations, facilitate development projects in their areas, attracting foreign capital by releasing land to investors, but they also seek to foster the participation of the communities under their authority in externally initiated development projects.

Through this new role of chiefs in community development, corporations can establish linkages with smallholders by approaching the chief and other institutions of community development rather than having to establish relations with numerous individuals or households. These community representatives are also responsible for regulating behaviour, by appeasing and cajoling community dwellers into putting community development interests above their individual misgivings and concerns.

Land relations in the forestry sector

Similar developments to those that have occurred in the agricultural sector can also be found in the forestry sector, although in a different external form. A study of tenure relations in the forestry sector should help to reveal the inner dynamics of the land question and land policy in relation to the penetration of capital and commoditisation of natural resources.

Although timber was exported from the Gold Coast in small quantities from the 1880s, logging for the export trade was largely limited to areas around Aowin in the Western Region, where logs could be transported down the major rivers to the port of Takoradi, and to areas near the railways between Takoradi and the gold mines. The timber resources in the interior, in the Eastern, Central, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions lay largely unexploited because of transport problems. Early attempts to haul timber from Kyebi in the Eastern Region to Accra by yoke oxen proved a failure (Dickson,

1969). The potential for developing a timber industry in the hinterland had to wait the opening up of the Accra-Kumasi road in 1923 and the Huni Valley-Kade (Eastern Region) railway in 1927. It was not until the late 1940s that with the further consolidation of a road network and the introduction of the timber truck that a large timber industry catering to the export trade came into being. Prior to this, timber was largely the province of small African pit-saw operators catering to the domestic market.

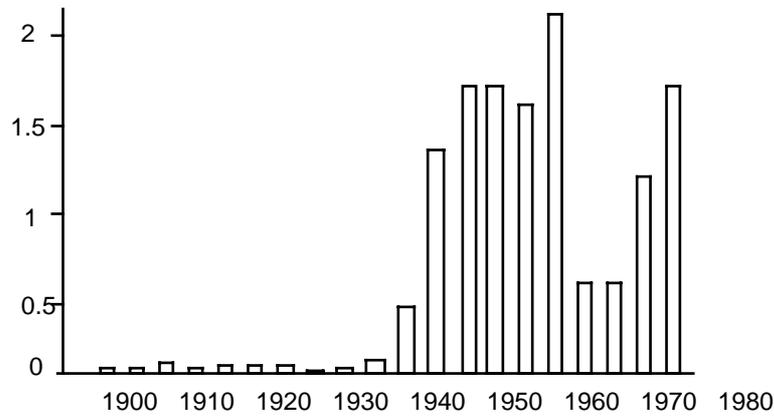


Figure 2.1. Volume of timber exports (in million cubic metres)
Source: Forest Planning Branch, Kumasi

By the late 1930s, new legislation came into being to regulate and facilitate the growth of the timber industry. The 1939 Concessions Ordinance was concerned with protecting the interests of British timber companies by excluding rival European firms. Low rents and royalties were offered as mechanisms to promote the growth of the timber industry. As Foggie and Piasecki (1962:241) comment: "The royalties are still incredibly low, probably being the lowest stumpage values in the world, and form an insignificant cost against the final value of the product".

Further controls were enacted with the 1948 Forest Trees and Timber Ordinance. This sought to further regulate logging "to enable wasteful and uneconomic cutting and felling to be prohibited". It empowered the governor in council to issue property marks for the registration of people with rights to fell trees, to issue licences for the felling of forest trees, and "to prohibit the purchase, sale, export of possession of forest trees and timber cut, felled or collected or moved". This created conditions where the concession system could now be extended outside forest reserves on to farmland.

The growth of the timber industry in the post-war boom of the 1940s and 1950s coincided with a major period of cocoa expansion and rapid colonisation by cocoa farmers of new frontier areas in Ahafo and the Central and Western regions. The Forestry Department and the timber industry were concerned about the large number of trees that were being felled in the opening up forests for cocoa cultivation. The 1948 Forest Policy sought to win these valuable resources for the timber industry by creating a framework for "salvage felling". Timber concessionaires were allowed to move on to newly acquired farmland in forest frontier areas and clear the valuable timber trees before farmers were allowed to enter the land. The 1959 Protected Timber Lands Act enabled the Forestry Department to declare any area of "valuable forest" a "protected area", which was subject to restrictions on farming, cutting of trees and settlement until it had been logged of all valuable species by timber companies. When exploitation had ceased, they were dereserved and the owners were allowed to farm. Through this legislation, more than 1,000 square miles of forest land in the forest zone were brought under protection for logging (Amankwah, 1989).

The legislation of the 1940s and 1950s led to a further erosion in the position of farmers in relation to land and natural resources. It prevented farmers from opening up new forest land when they pleased and established the monopoly rights of concessionaires to timber outside the reserves. The Forestry Department hoped that this salvage felling would relieve pressure on the forest reserves. They would be able to develop new management practices that would maximise timber production in the forest reserves for future exploitation, after the farming frontier areas were denuded of valuable timber.

The achievement of independence in 1957 resulted in a new orientation in the timber industry towards indigenisation. The 1962 Concessions Act enabled the state to gain increased power to regulate the timber industry on stool lands by vesting forest trees in the office of the president in "trust for the stools concerned". This effectively denied farmers rights to economic benefit from timber trees on their land. Regulation was used to promote the interests of the entrepreneurial class that had supported the CPP, and which had been agitating for the indigenisation of the timber industry. Between 1961 and 1971, only two of 102 timber concessions went to foreign timber companies. Indigenisation was also supported by the establishment of a fund to promote indigenous enterprises. In 1962, the number of Ghanaian timber merchants rose from 121 to 621. Smaller concessions were created to support the growth of small and medium-size timber companies. Between 1961 and 1971, the average size of timber concessions fell from 686 square kilometres to 41 square kilometres (IIED, 1993). The maintenance of low royalties and rents also encouraged Ghanaian timber merchants.

The indigenisation of the timber industry did not lead to a radical new direction for national timber development. The major focus of the timber industry continued to be the export of logs. Low concession rents and royalties encouraged the granting of concessions as an act of political patronage. Many concessionaires lacked the necessary equipment to log timber and became speculators in timber resources, subcontracting their concessions to other loggers and gaining access to rentier capital by brokering concessions. Other timber companies essentially acted as representatives of larger international timber firms, developing local timber sourcing operations in return for capital support (Friends of the Earth, 1992).

In the early 1970s the Acheampong government passed legislation that enabled it to gain major shares in foreign timber firms. One example was the 1972 Timber Operation (Government Participation) Decree. This enabled the government to acquire a 55 per cent share in major timber companies (IIED, 1993).

By the late 1970s, indigenisation had reached its zenith but with economic recession and the lack of capital for the rehabilitation of equipment, many national timber companies collapsed. The annual value of timber fell from \$138 million in 1971 to \$15 million in 1982, declining from 18 per cent of export earnings to 2 per cent. By the early 1980s Lebanese and Mediterranean firms became dominant in the timber industry, displacing bankrupt Ghanaian firms (Friends of the Earth, 1992).

Revamping the timber industry: the era of structural adjustment

The adoption of structural adjustment measures in 1983, with their early emphasis on promoting export-oriented growth, resulted in the disbursement of large loans to the forestry sector. Between 1983 and 1986 about \$140 million in soft loans was pumped into the forestry sector by donors through the Export Rehabilitation Project (Friends of the Earth, 1992). This resulted in the rapid expansion of logging capacity and an increasing volume of exports. The volume of timber exports rose rapidly from 400 cubic metres in 1981 to 1,200 cubic metres in 1988. Under the policy of liberalisation, were foreign firms encouraged to once again enter the timber sector. The logging capacity of the timber industry now exceeded the available resource. However, the repayment terms of loans ensured that timber companies continued to expand logging operations to meet their obligations. With insufficient supplies of timber available in the forest reserves and the introduction of a policy of sustainable forest reserve management by the Forestry Department, timber companies increasingly turned to farmland as a source of timber. By the early 1990s, 80 per cent of timber exports originated from off-reserve areas. New processing technologies which enabled poor timber species to be trans-

formed into wood products resulted in an expansion in the number of tree species being logged, including poor timber species that were common on farmland. Species such as *Ceiba pentandra*, *Antiaris toxicaria* and *Terminalia superba*, which were deliberately preserved by farmers for maintenance of soil fertility and to facilitate processes of soil regeneration under the bush-fallowing systems, were logged in large numbers (Amanor, 1996).

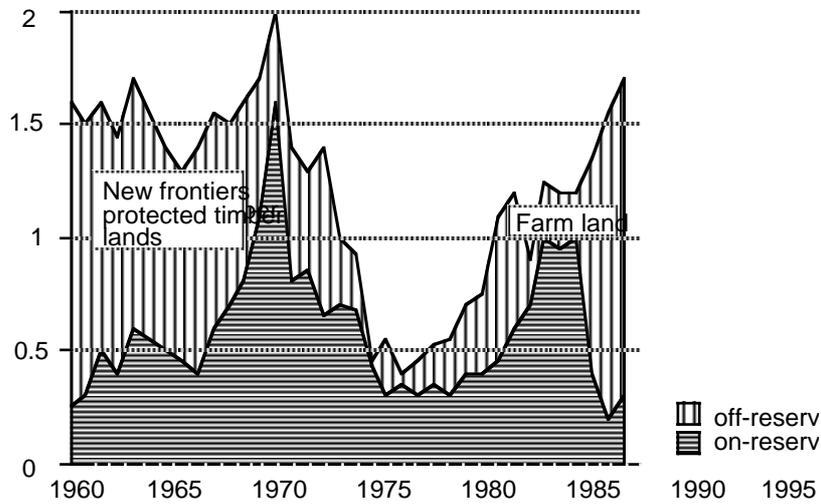


Figure 2.2. Sources of timber exports (volume in million cubic metres)

During the 1950s and early 1960s most timber for the export trade was sourced from new frontier lands that were declared Protect Timber Lands. Farmers were prevented from moving into these areas until all viable timber had been felled by concessionaires. By the late 1960s production was increasingly supplemented from forest reserves. With the adoption of structural adjustment in 1983, following the crisis of mid-1970s, timber logging capacity increased and with excessive pressures on the forest reserves, limits were placed on the extradition of timber from them. By the early 1990s farmland became the main source of timber for the export trade, disrupting farming operations and domestic timber production.

Source: Forest Planning Branch, Kumasi.

Although timber contractors are supposed to pay compensation for damage done to farms in the process of logging compensation is often derisory. Between 1979 and 1995, compensation rates remained the same and did not reflect the devaluation of the cedi. Since there have been no laid-down procedures for logging on farms until recently, timber concessionaires often evade payment of compensation. Loggers can avoid paying compensation because they are influential and have powerful connections. By contrast, farmers are poorly organised and have few avenues for articulating grievances. At Kwabodi, in the Akyem Oda area, a group of migrant Akuapem farmers narrated their experience:

We once tried to stop one timber contractor from cutting down trees on our farms since he was logging excessively, spoiling our farms and giving us nothing. We demanded compensation from him. The following day we were summoned by the assistant police commissioner, a friend of the contractor, who gave us a stern warning. He told us that we had no rights to the trees, that they belong to the government. So why should we ask for compensation? When we told him that the felling was causing too much damage to our farms he replied, "Who told you to farm there?" He warned us to be careful, respectful and to mind our own business if we did not want trouble (Interview conducted by author, 1996).

As a result of the encroachment of timber contractors on to their farms, many cultivators have taken to destroying regenerating timber trees on their farms. As Opanin Kwaku Darko narrated to Koomson (1995), "The operation of loggers and wanton destruction of crops are enough evidence for [me] not to maintain any coppice. Putting fire to them [the stumps] solves it all".

Multiple land rights, chiefs and the erosion of farmers' rights in trees

The present framework for forest tree tenure does not recognise any rights of farmers in the trees they choose to preserve on their farmlands. The trees belong to the chief and are vested in the state to manage on behalf of the chiefs for the development and regulation of the timber industry in the "national interest". The 1992 Constitution establishes modalities for the disbursement of stool revenues, including timber. Ten per cent of the total royalties are taken by the state for administration. The remaining royalties are to be divided between the stools and local government of which 25 per cent goes to the paramount stool, 20 per cent to the local landowning stool and 55 per cent to the district assembly. None of the revenues goes to the farmer on whose land the trees have been preserved. These regulations are established by appealing to tradition. But this tradition is an invented tradition which has been changed constantly to fit evolving socioeconomic conditions.

In the precolonial period, there is little evidence to support the monopolisation of natural extractive resources by states, including the most

centralised polities such as Asante. Even with important resources such as gold, which served as the major currency, autonomous small-scale production was dominant. Arhin (1990:527) writes that “commoners purchased in the markets such foreign articles as salt, cloth and iron implements as well as local craft products. Such goods could only be purchased with gold dust, and hence ordinary men and women were obliged to engage in gold-winning activities”.

In Asante, gold production consisted of two sectors, the first based on state-controlled production and the second on small-scale production by commoners who washed streams for gold and sank shallow pits. The rights of rulers enabled them to appropriate a share of the substantial wealth realised through the exploitation of natural resources rather than establishing monopoly control over their exploitation (Wilks, 1993:99).

Similar arrangements characterised the emerging timber industry in the early colonial period. The colonial archives contains records of Native Authority bylaws that regulate the share of the value of felled timber that should be paid to the stool. Thus, the Akyem Abuakwa Stool Lands declaration of 6 July 1931 stated that “a native who fells a tree on farm or *mfufua* [fallow] is liable to pay to the stool one log from each tree”.¹ Similarly, in a study of Akyem Kotoku, Field (1948:72) commented that if a farmer “wishes to sell a tree on his own cleared land he must ask permission of the chief and part of the proceeds will be claimed by the town”.

Field elaborates that the chief could claim one-third of the substantial wealth of the land in natural resources other than agricultural crops. Of the one-third received by the chief, two-thirds were distributed through the major divisions of the state and one-third retained by the chief. The process of appropriation and distribution of wealth reaffirmed allegiance and social ranking within the state.

The Forestry Department Annual Report for 1937–38 noted: “The bulk of the timber used in the Gold Coast is pit sawn. This is a difficult industry to organise, particularly as much is carried out on an exchange basis: a tree is sawn up and the owner takes a proportion of the boards, the sawyers take the rest” (p.8).

The division of timber between farmer and pit-sawyer was frequently based on the *abusa* system, with the farmer taking a one-third share of the sawn boards and the pit-sawyer taking a two-thirds share. These arrangements continued to be common and were recognised as a normal part of the timber industry into the 1960s. Small-scale logging of individual trees on farmland without property marks or licences was common in the 1960s and

¹. Ghana National Archives, Akyem Abuakwa Land Law, ADM 11/1017.

beyond. In describing the timber industry in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Foggie and Piasecki (1962:238–41) comment:

There is in addition a large production of sawn timber by small groups of pitsawyers scattered throughout the country ... For the latter, no capital except axes and saws and the picks and shovels to dig the saw-pit may be required, as the trees may occasionally be obtained on a share basis, one-third of the planks produced going to the owner and two-thirds to the sawing gang.

Today, it is a criminal activity for farmers to sell trees to chainsaw operators. According to the law, timber trees are vested in the office of the president to manage on behalf of chiefs who are the owners of timber. This is an *invented tradition* of the 1960s. During the 1950s it was the norm for farmers to sell trees to pit-sawyers.

The change in ideological conception of timber resources began to occur in the post-war period when the timber export industry began to develop rapidly to meet the needs of post-war European building reconstruction. Before this period the constraints of transport prevented the development of a timber industry deep in the interior of the forest and timber was confined to major rivers in the Western Region down which logs could be floated to the coast and the railway. Improved road communications and the importation of timber trucks in the post-war period enabled timber companies to exploit the forest interior. With the development of an export-oriented timber industry largely controlled by British interests, concerns about controls over concessions and property marks became important. Timber resources were effectively wrested from farmers with the enactment of the 1962 Concession Act. Outwardly this legislation appeared to protect timber resources for national interests and to promote national timber concessions against the domination of the industry by British firms, and also to regulate the activities of chiefs by vesting trees in the office of the president to administer on behalf of the chiefs. However, in vesting all timber resources in the state, the 1962 Concessions Act created and institutionalised the myth that farmers traditionally had no rights to timber trees growing on their land.

In the early post-war period there was a division of specialisation within the timber industry: pit-sawyers focused on supplying the domestic market and timber concessionaires on the export trade. The pit-sawyers concentrated on felling *odum* (*Milicia excelsa*) and *wawa* (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*), the common timber on the domestic market. Concessionaires specialised in felling African mahogany (*Khaya* spp.) and African cedars (*Entandrophragma* spp.). Little of the timber produced by timber concessionaires has been for the domestic market: it has been oriented to the export market and, until recently, most timber was exported as round logs rather than as value-added sawn boards or processed wood products such as veneers, plywoods and

particle boards. This has prompted Foggie and Piasecki (1962: 238) to comment that

though Ghana produces some of the finest hardwoods in the world for flooring, furniture and fitments and a wide range of utility timbers, they are generally exported to people and countries who realise their value and are relatively little used in their country of origin.

The pit-sawyers mainly operated in farming areas while concessionaires exploited timber in forest reserves and new frontier areas of mature forest, the so-called "protected timber lands". However, as concern over issuing concessions and property marks became dominant in the 1950s, existing timber concessionaires effectively obtained a monopoly over large areas of forest from which the informal sector was excluded.

In recent years, timber concessions have increasingly been given out in farming areas. This has effectively undermined and criminalised the informal sector. The minister for lands and forestry in 1995, Dr. Kwabena Adjei, was reported in the *Daily Graphic* of 5 August 1995 as stating:

Lately there has been a disturbing development in chain-saw operators. This has been the swarming up of the trade by thugs. The criminals are violent, vicious and daring illegal operators who armed themselves with cudgels, cutlasses and shotguns when carrying out the felling, sawing of trees and attack forestry officials who try to ward them off".

Dr. Adjei mentioned district forest officials, district chief executives and assembly members as well as officials from the customs, forest products inspection bureau, chiefs and elders, drivers and transport owners, and buyers and sellers as the main collaborators of illegal chain saw operators.

This statement ignores the fact that chainsaw operators are the heirs of the old pit-saw gangs and that it is the concessionaires who have expanded from the forest reserves into the "protected lands" and then during the 1980s, into established farmlands and cocoa plantations. It, however, points out the complexity of the present situation arising from the value of timber. The informal timber sector is now no longer the preserve of small-scale informal operators responding to local domestic needs. Many urban-based bureaucrats, politicians, entrepreneurs and timber operators are now investing in this sector and bulking the net output of organised networks of chain-saw operators. Sawmills have also been participating in the illegal trade to meet the needs of their large installed capacities. The small-scale informal operators responding to the needs of the locality that are not catered to by the largely export-oriented timber concession industry are threatened by both the aggressive expansion of the concession system and organised chain-saw networks. The informal timber sector operating on farmland has become

big business and many “wayside operators” are now the “front men” for highly organised urban-based ventures run by powerful individuals.

However, chainsaw operators are often preferred by farmers since they offer them a share of the boards they saw. Since they saw the boards on the farm, they create much less damage to farmlands than concessionaires, who haul round logs through farms. The chainsaw operators are often integrated into the rural economy, providing important functions for farmers, such as felling unwanted trees. As the timber industry has aggressively expanded into farmland, closer ties may have developed between chainsaw operators and cultivators. Farmers may call in chainsaw operators to fell unwanted timber trees before timber concessionaires come in to fell the tree and haul it through the farm. The unwanted tree category has been extended to include timber trees that concessionaires may invade the farm to fell.

During the course of this century the concept of multiple rights in land has changed. At the beginning of the century it was a concept that allowed chiefs rights to a share in the substantial wealth of the land. Towards the end of the century, it accords timber concessionaires monopoly rights to timber trees on farmland and powers to enter and damage farms with impunity. This monopolisation of rights to timber has eroded the informal rural timber sector without providing rural communities with access to timber and viable off-farm livelihoods. The consequences have been disastrous and have turned the off-reserve areas into a free-for-all of unregulated timber harvesting. This has led to massive deforestation of fallow land.

Restructuring the forestry sector and structural adjustment

From the late 1980s, the massive destruction of the timber resources of Ghana in the name of export-oriented growth became self-evident. Since then, the major donor focus in the forestry sector has been to promote the rationalisation of the industry and institutional reform for improved sustainable management by the Forestry Department. In 1988, the Forest Resource Management Project (FRMP) was initiated. The major objectives of FRMP were to introduce policy reform, promote rural participation in forestry and strengthen forestry management institutions (IIED, 1993). Policy reforms have striven to introduce environmental concerns into forest management and new controls to promote a more efficient industry with less wastage and more emphasis on value added processing rather than the export of round logs. Other concerns are to introduce more realistic concession fees that will force companies to be more competitive and introduce costing mechanisms that reflect the scarcity of timber and the discounting of its “environmental cost”. The allocation of concessions is moving from a system of patronage to one of open bidding by timber firms. Bidding for concessions is to be limited

to the top thirty companies on the basis of their export earnings and performance. No new concessions will be granted to firms that do not process logs. This will favour the largest timber firms and those with international financial and management support, resulting in the globalisation of the timber industry.

The current framework gives a new emphasis to developing a collaborative forestry with the participation of rural communities. A collaborative forest management unit of the forest planning branch has been created and this has concentrated on working out the modalities for greater involvement by communities in forestry issues. The most important development in collaborative forest management has been the creation of new procedures for off-reserve timber harvesting that give farmers a role in the monitoring of timber harvesting. Legislation is also being prepared that will encourage individual farmers and communities to plant timber and to have rights of ownership to the product as well as technical support (Committee for the Review of Laws in the Forestry Sector, 1995).

The Interim Measures to Control Illegal Timber Harvesting outside Forest Reserves of 1995 establishes a set of procedures for felling all off-reserve timber:

In the first stage, the tree which the logger wishes to harvest is to be *inspected* by the Forestry Department, the logger, community representatives and concerned farmers. Farmers may raise any objections they have to the tree being felled on their farm, even in concession areas. Any tree felled against the wishes of the farmer is illegally felled.

In the second stage, a *felling permit* is issued by a Forestry Department Officer before felling can begin.

Thirdly, a *post-felling inspection* is conducted at the site to ensure that the felling regulations have been followed. The inspection should be conducted with community and stool representatives where possible. The concerned farmers and community representatives can voice any complaints about the felling operation to the Forestry Officers. Disputes between farmers and loggers must be resolved before the Forestry Officer can move to the fourth stage.

Fourthly, after a satisfactory post-felling inspection the Forestry Department will issue a *Certificate of Conveyance*, without which logs, boards, canoes, commercial firewood and charcoal cannot be legally moved.

In theory, these procedures allow farmers to veto the felling of trees on their land or to demand a level of compensation they are happy with before they allow a tree to be felled. The rationale behind this is that the ability to negotiate a fee before felling should encourage farmers to preserve trees and give them an incentive to monitor the felling of timber. The interim measures introduce another cost to loggers that will create pricing incentives that

reflect the scarcity of timber and encourage a leaner, more rational timber industry dominated by the more efficient large firms.

A second area in which reforms are being formulated involves the creation of social responsibility agreements or timber utilisation contracts (TUC) between communities and timber contractors. These agreements will replace concession leases within an area with a process of local consultation to define a code of conduct between landowning chiefs, communities and timber contractors. Communities will be able to demand that timber contractors use particular types of equipment in extracting timber—such as pneumatic tyred vehicles which do less damage to farms than caterpillar vehicles—and provide social infrastructure development such as wood beams for community projects and roads to serve the community. The community for its part will undertake to cooperate with the concessionaires to preserve trees that the contractor expresses an interest in felling. Both parties will be expected to work out a programme for conserving and preserving forest resources for future exploitation.

A New Timber Rights Bill is also before parliament. This will give farmers rights in forest trees that they cultivate on their land, but not to “naturally occurring trees” that they have preserved on fallow land or farmland. Significantly, there have been no attempts to radically reform the laws of timber tree ownership. These reforms occur within the existing context of monopoly ownership of trees by chiefs that is vested in the state that contracts them out to loggers on behalf of its clients, the chiefs. Thus, the concept of community participation is one of dominance of the community by landowning chiefs, and the process of community consultation has been slanted towards the chiefs and elders as the representatives of communities. The reforms do not address the issues of supply of timber for the domestic economy (beyond a limited supply of beams for community development) and the contradictions that have arisen between an export-oriented timber industry and expanding domestic rural and urban timber needs. In this respect, it will be interesting to see if these reforms can really place a wedge between farmers and the informal chainsaw, if the compensation fees that farmers are allowed to negotiate are commensurate with the third share of boards many chainsaw operators offer farmers, or if the new rights given to farmers will merely exist on paper. The reforms have grown out of environmental concerns—and the need to alleviate the marginalisation of farmers and give them an interest in preserving timber. However, they create conditions for the emergence of new types of levers that can link farmers as producers of farm-cultivated timber with the timber industry.

Contracting forest trees and encadrement of the peasantry

During the 1970s, embryonic forms of contract relations between farmers and the Forestry Department developed that mirrored state-run encadrement and contract farming relations in the agricultural sector. The context of this was the development of industrial plantation forestry. During this era, in international forestry circles it was envisaged that plantations of fast-growing timber trees would replace natural forests, and projects were developed in which the forests were cleared of trees and replanted with plantations. The modalities for this development were based on the *taungya* system. *Taungya* is an agri-silvicultural system of forest-plantation establishment in which food crops are interplanted with timber trees in the early years of plantation establishment. Land in the forest reserves is leased to farmers who provide labour by nursing and tending the timber trees in return for access to the forest land to plant food crops for between three and five years, when the trees began to form a canopy and shade out future crop planting. The trees belong to the Forestry Department and the crops belong to the farmers.

Taungya was introduced into Ghana in 1928 in areas in which the creation of forest reserves had led to land scarcity. It enabled the Forestry Department to establish tree plantations at a reduced cost. However, *taungya* occurred on a limited scale until the late 1960s and 1970s. In 1966 there were 47 square kilometres of *taungya* plantation. In 1973, this had risen to 150 square kilometres. In 1972, it was planned to develop an annual target of 104 square kilometres of industrial timber plantation in 36 forest reserves. This was to be achieved by a rapid expansion of the *taungya* system (Brookman Amissah, 1978). Under the Operation Feed Yourself programme, *taungya* became increasingly important and was viewed by government as a way of expanding food production by releasing forest land to land-hungry farmers. However, the scope of the operations outstripped the ability of the Forestry Department to manage the system. Malpractices developed in which forestry officials and workers began to sell the rights to *taungya* to speculators and brokers who then made profits by reselling the rights to farmers. Farmers perceived that they had bought rights to cultivate the land rather than entered into a contract to provide labour in exchange for land. They ignored the tending of the trees, which they thought was the responsibility of the "*taungya* contractor". Large areas of forest reserve were rapidly transformed into scrubland and grassland. In the 1980s, the *taungya* exercise was halted by the Forestry Department and only a few pockets of *taungya* remain.

In recent years, plans have been developed to reintroduce the *taungya* system as a mode of rehabilitating the forest reserves. In this new variant adapted to structural adjustment, it has been proposed that areas of the forest reserves are to be leased to private firms for plantation development. To assure forest-edge communities of "benefits" in the forest reserve, the *taungya* system will be reintroduced as a system of community participation with private industry. While consultations have been carried out on the social and economic logistics for plantation development with community participation, difficulties have been found in establishing the modalities and in attracting capital to carry out the large investments required for this venture.

Plans have also been drawn up to establish a fund and back-up technical services to encourage farmers to grow timber trees on their own land. Since timber takes a long time to grow, one of the main problems in encouraging farmers' investment in trees is the discounting of capital over such a long period. By providing loans and forward-buying agreements, farmers may be encouraged to take up the cultivation of timber, which will at its harvest be shared between the company or project and the farmers or their heirs. With the growing shortage of timber, a few private companies are also attempting to develop contractual relations with farmers and other levers that will provide them with incentives to grow timber. Two such companies are the Swiss Lumber Company and the Joint Forest Management Project established by Ghana Primewoods Products and Dalhoff Larsen and Horneman A/S of Denmark.

The Swiss Lumber Company

The Swiss Lumber Company, a subsidiary of Weisser and Sons (a Dutch firm), has implemented a contract-farmer timber cultivation scheme around Wassa Amenfie in the Western Region. The major constraint on the Swiss Lumber Company is getting enough lumber to meet the capacity of its sawmill, since it operates in an area in which most of the forest has already been allocated to other concessionaires. To meet its future timber needs, the company has invested in plantation development and in contract schemes with surrounding farmers and communities for the cultivation of timber. The project contracts out land from individual farmers for plantation development, which is to be shared between the company and the farmer at maturity. The contract gives the company the first option to purchase the timber at maturity at the then prevailing market prices. The company also pays the farmers a yearly rent and gives them an advance payment, which can be as high as between €2 and €5 million. The size of the downpayments influences the share of timber the farmers will get at maturity. Farmers may receive

between 20 and 50 per cent of the timber at harvest. The company also provides a weeding contract to maintain the plantation, the first and preferred option going to the farmer on whose land the plantation is established. Since it is only economic for the company to establish large-scale operations, neighbouring farmers are encouraged to come together to release blocks of land.

In 1991, the Swiss Lumber Company developed a community project with the chiefs and elders at Akyikyire on a 117.5 hectare piece of land. The company and the community hold a 50 per cent share in the timber at maturity. The company has also undertaken to provide the community with a health post in return for community participation in the plantation project. While the plantation has been cleared, work has not yet started on the health post. The company is waiting to receive the indentures on the land before it builds the post.

In a second community project at Wassa Dunkwa, on a 20 hectare parcel of land which does not lie under concession, the Swiss Lumber Company has entered into a contract to help the community establish a teak plantation. In return, the company has gained the rights to all the standing timber trees on that land. The company is responsible for helping the community manage the plantation for the first three years. After this period, the community will take sole responsibility for managing the plantation. The company has also provided the community with roofing sheets, cement and timber for the construction and repair of schools.

Discussions with the chief and elders at Akyikyire found them deliberating about new ways by which they could extend community timber contracts. These discussions focused on the migrant communities that had acquired land in the 1950s for cocoa farming. The chiefs were exploring new avenues through which they could "encourage" migrant farmers to replace cocoa with timber which would enable them, the landowners, to gain a one-third share in the timber. While they were not able to reach any conclusion, this episode shows the potential of these types of community timber arrangements to alter existing land relations.

Through developing contracts with communities and individual farmers, the Swiss Lumber Company has been able to expand its potential source of timber without significantly enlarging its labour force and scale of operation. The high value of timber enables it to use comparatively small sums of capital to gain large influence within a capital-scarce rural economy and to gain access to land, labour and timber trees outside the concession system. It is able to do this without alienating or tying up capital in large tracts of land by operating within a framework of community participation. To ensure the security of its investments it needs to work within a legalistic framework that recognises community rights and secures contracts with communities.

Gwira Bansa is an area of pristine wet forest lying between the Fure and Draw forest reserves in a very remote area of the Western Region. Few roads, feeder roads or markets exist within the area and farmers have a difficult time in marketing their crops. The concession rights for timber are held by Ghana Primewoods Products Ltd. (GAP). Recently, there has been a large influx of cocoa farmers into the area as a result of land shortage problems in other areas. GAP is anxious to contain this process and to preserve the timber resources of the area for its own exploitation. It has developed a project with Dalhoff Larsen and Horneman A/S of Denmark with backing from Danida, for the area to promote sustainable forest agriculture and limit the destruction of the forest. Working closely with the chief and providing funds for community development and support in kind, it is attempting to influence the chief not to release more land for cultivation in the project area. It has also deliberated on forcefully limiting the areas farmers can cultivate, but has rejected this approach as incompatible with its "community participation" approach. However, these deliberations were made known to people in the locality, and have filled many farmers with the fear that their land will be taken from them if they do not cooperate with the project. The project is encouraging farmers to grow on their land timber species which they can sell in future. It has developed a nursery and released free timber seedlings for farmers to cultivate on their land. The project is also experimenting with new forms of agriculture that can be developed without cutting down forest trees. It has introduced black pepper and new hybrid cola varieties, snail rearing, mushroom cultivation and fish farming.

While the project does not yet have a clear sense of direction or worked-out contractual arrangements with farmers, it shows the potential for a new type of agribusiness company to develop with long-term interests in timber and short-term investments in crop production. Through infrastructure development, roads, back-up technical services, market channels, linkages with the landowning chief and community development, the company may be able to control what the farmers grow and introduce packages of crops and trees over which they have monopoly control. The investment in crop production and its integration with timber trees solves problems of long-term discounting. It enables both the farmer and the company to gain short-term profits while the timber matures. It can also make investment in timber production attractive to farmers without the need for the company to sink large amounts of money in forward-buying incentives. Support for the development of high income agriculture on condition of timber tree cultivation thus becomes the incentive to secure farmers' participation in the project.

The future

These examples of new contract relations between timber companies and the peasantry are in embryonic form. Nevertheless, they clearly show a new emphasis on working with community structures and introducing levers based on provision of capital loans and infrastructures for community development to gain access and control over the land, labour and productive ventures of peasant farmers without expropriating their land. These developments are likely to become more prominent as naturally occurring timber becomes scarce and the timber industry becomes more oriented towards cultivating timber. They may evolve into large-scale "agri-timber-business" in which outgrower linkages are developed, with farming communities growing timber and exotic fruits, foods and forest products for the global supermarket, thereby closely integrating high-value long-term timber products with short-term food and fruit products that can be processed and marketed by large transnational consortiums.

Periodising the land question

From the forgoing analysis it is now possible to periodise the main stages in the evolution of the land question in Ghana.

In the first stage, corresponding with colonial rule, the main extractive natural resources in which international capital was interested were assured by the concession system and control over concessions by chiefs who were administrative agents of colonial rule. Agriculture was dominated by mercantile capital with monopoly control over external marketing rather than through direct investment in production. The main objectives of land policy were to check the emergence of individual land tenure and of an indigenous rural capitalist class and to strengthen "native custom" and communal land tenure. The intentions were to preserve and strengthen the position of the chiefly landowning classes and prevent the growth of land speculation that might affect the future granting of favourable concessions to British firms. Although the emergence of a rural capitalist class and land sales preceded colonialism, the invention of an endless tradition of customary laws enabled the landowning chiefs to play an increasingly dominant role in the cocoa economy.

In the timber sector, the right of chiefs to the timber resources of the land was established as the ideological foundation of the concession system. With the development of an expatriate timber industry in the late 1940s, this phenomenon enabled concessionaires to gain monopoly rights in timber over specific areas of land through negotiation with chiefs. Gradually the area in which the informal domestic timber industry could exploit timber receded and farmers' rights to timber resources declined. By the 1940s, land

administration entered into crisis. Colonial policy, with its emphasis on the preserving the customary law as laid down at the beginning of the colonial period, was out of step with the increasing commercialisation of land and agriculture. Changes in agricultural technology and the expansion of international machinery and input manufacturing sectors were creating pressures for the replacement of mercantile modes of domination by interventions in large-scale mechanised production.

The second stage began with the emergence of radical nationalism. This had the twin aims of reducing the power of chiefs in the interests of popular democracy and promoting the indigenisation of enterprises. However, the latter objective came to dominate and the main concern of the state was to appropriate land for large-scale agricultural ventures by the state bureaucracy and its private capitalist allies. Early antagonism towards chiefs gave way to an alliance in which control and administration of land was a joint venture between the chiefs and the state, albeit regulated by the state. The chiefs could appropriate land from the peasantry for the state and its allies, since, according to the invented tradition which was now being propped up by the nationalist state, the land belonged to the chiefs and not to the cultivator. Under this fiction, cultivators would be compensated for the crops on their expropriated land and chiefs would receive royalties and rents for the land they released to the state and industry. The dominant ideology of this period was modernisation. The peasantry was not mobilised for national development, but the state sought to replace them by nurturing a class of large capitalist farmers supplied with expropriated land, subsidised inputs and state loans. It was envisaged that this class would transform agriculture.

The main concern of land reform policy was with individual title as the mode through which capitalist farmers could be assured of security in land that they acquired or appropriated. In the timber sector, the state attempted to foster indigenisation of the industry. However, this focused on helping Ghanaian capitalists gain access to the export trade rather than promoting domestic timber manufacturing and marketing. In the process, the timber industry gained control over the timber resources on farmers' land and the ability of the informal domestic timber sector to gain access to timber declined. In this era, the peasantry became increasingly marginalised as natural resources were used by the state to promote the development of indigenous capitalism.

The third phase in the land question arose with the economic recession of the mid-1970s, the poor performance of the private and state capitalist agricultural sector and its inability to consolidate food production and capital accumulation. The state increasingly turned to international capital as a means of financing and managing production through joint ventures and shirked its commitments to an indigenous capitalist class. In alliance with

international capital, the state turned to new methods of production based on creating levers that tied the peasantry to capital by creating pressure on them to produce to the requirements of capital in return for credit, loans of farm inputs and cash, and access to land. Contract farming arrangements became popular on many development projects in which the project's management took over the decisionmaking process on farmers' plots, deciding what farmers would grow and enforcing the sale of their produce to the project marketing department. Similarly, in the timber sector, the state explored contractual arrangements with farmers in which they were involved in forest rehabilitation through cultivating timber plantations in return for being allowed to grow crops on forest land. By the late 1970s, many mechanised farms and timber firms had ground to a halt and were unable to rehabilitate worn-out equipment.

In the fourth stage, a seriously weakened and crisis-ridden state submitted to the IMF for help and introduced structural adjustment. The implementation of structural adjustment reflects the final waning of indigenisation and nationalist investment in production and the emergence of international capital as the dominant force for organising national production and integrating it into world markets. Structural adjustment involves government divestiture of productive enterprises and development projects, so that it can focus on providing infrastructure and creating an enabling environment for industry. Since national capitalist accumulation was severely weakened in the crisis of the 1970s, divestiture essentially means the opening of the economy to foreign capital. Increasing foreign investment in natural resources and the rehabilitation of extractive "export-oriented" industry has led to the growth and expansion of concessions and international interest in land. This has resulted in new pressures for land titling and institutional reform in the organisation of land relations.

New forms of production are also coming into being that are changing perceptions of the land question. Rather than tie up large amounts of capital in land and costly litigation resulting from the expropriation of farms, several companies are now developing contractual relations, contract farming, and collaborative ventures with communities in which they seek to gain access to the labour, land, organisation and knowledge of communities. Through community development projects, credits and other levers, farmers are tied into the productive goals of transnational and agribusiness corporations.

In this approach, community participation becomes the philosophy of development and replaces modernisation. A major concern is to preserve community rights and organisation and community self-reliance. While this draws on early colonial concerns with protecting community rights, the emphasis is no longer on protecting them against commercialisation, but on

commercialising and commoditising the autonomous peasant community and its domestic mode of household production as part and parcel of a concession or sphere of development. In contrast with early forms of organisation in which land and labour were expropriated independently, the labour, land and the organisation of the community are being exploited as a single commodity without expropriating labour from land or hiring expropriated labour—although the expropriation of land still occurs when necessary. While the companies can carry out considerable investments in infrastructure to create the necessary preconditions for their productive ventures, community organisations contribute considerably to this process, absorbing many transaction costs associated with quite ambitious projects. This approach converges with policies of decentralisation that are concerned with local communities absorbing transaction costs of infrastructural development and with districts becoming self-financing.

As a result of these new approaches, in the 1990s a growing concern of land policy is to reconcile private title and the need of conventional rural capitalism for land and land security with the emergence of contractual arrangements between industry/agribusiness and communities. Many firms are wrestling with the need to formalise the contractual obligations of communities to corporations within legal frameworks that are more accustomed to establishing individual land titling rights. They are looking for new frameworks that can express collaborative relations between communities and companies that may involve land, labour, organisational and information components in formal contractual terms. These new relations are being articulated through calls for new tenure relations that uphold “indigenous rights”, “community participation” and the “traditional authority” of the chief as a focus or expression of the interests of capital in the community.

Struggling to understand the impact of world recession on Africa in the early 1980s, Wallerstein (1985:55) wrote:

The elimination of the African (and other) subsistence sectors and the corollary, full proletarianisation of world labor, must in the coming period intensify the political conflict caused by contradictory interests, unless the capitalist class can discover some new artificial equivalent of the subsistence sector and its semi-proletarian labor force.

The expropriation of the African peasantry by big industry as envisaged by Wallerstein in the 1980s has not occurred. The concept of community participation in economic ventures and the development of contracts with the community may be emerging as the “artificial equivalent of the subsistence sector”. New forms of production contracts can act to subordinate independent labour to substitute for free wage labour, thus lowering the transaction costs of production (Watts, 1994; Brass, 1986). These relations maintain the

cheapness of communal and domestic labour while absorbing the peasantry into relations of commodity production that are dependent upon industry and capital. They subvert the autonomy of household production, but make it absorb the transaction and social welfare costs of integration into commercial and global markets and a neo-liberal democratic economy.

3. Adjusting to new land pressures and commoditisation in Akyem

New alignments in land relations will only be partly determined by changes that are occurring in international capitalism. Other important factors that will determine the outcome are the perceptions of rural people of these developments, and their interaction with each other in response to these new developments. The expansion of capital into rural areas results in the increasing commoditisation of natural resources. This affects rural consciousness, but not necessarily in conformity with the interests of international capital. Change may lead to increasing social differentiation within communities, which promotes divisiveness, petty jealousies, and prevents the bulk of the peasantry from organising to protect their interests. Corporate interests and the state may be able to exploit these divisions to meet their interests. This, however, is also problematic for new models of community participation that are based on mobilising the whole community behind its chiefs and elders. Alternatively, an increasing awareness of new commodity values may lead to the development of livelihoods that are in opposition to international capital and which become criminalised by the state. Sections of the community may organise in opposition to the penetration of capital and projects that they see as undermining their struggle for a livelihood. This chapter is concerned with effects of global capitalism on rural people's relations to the land and with their perceptions and responses to the increasing commoditisation of rural life.

The window into the life of the people is provided by the Akyem area of the Eastern Region. The Akyem area is rich in natural resources: in gold, diamonds, bauxite, timber and prime agricultural land. It is an area which, in recent years, has been affected by the granting of concessions and the expropriation of land. A large part of Akyem land lies under forest reserves. This chapter examines two settlements that have been affected by agribusiness: Kwae which has had its lands expropriated to create a nucleus plantation for the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation (GOPDC), while many farmers at Ntronang have been incorporated into the project as outgrowers. In addition, two communities living on the edge of forest reserves are included: Amantia lies inside the Pra-Anum Forest Reserves and suffers from serious land shortages, while the land behind Apapam has been expropriated for the creation of the Atewa Forest Reserve.

The Akyem area

The Akyem (or Akim) area is made up of three polities (*aman*, plural; *oman*, singular): Akyem Abuakwa, Akyem Kotoku and Akyem Bosome. These three polities do not lie on discrete contiguous blocks of lands. They are not defined by spatial parameters, but by political allegiance to an *omanhene* (paramount chief). Moreover, some settlements have changed their allegiance from one *omanhene* to another over time (Field, 1948). The *oman* is defined as a number of hierarchically organised stools (seats of power) owing allegiance to an *omanhene*. The *omanhene* of Akyem Abuakwa is based at Kyebi, that of Akyem Kotoku at Akyem Oda and that of Akyem Bosome at Akyem Swedru.

Figure 3.1 The Akyem Area of the Eastern Region and the Research Settlements

These *aman* originate from processes of migration during the seventeenth century when migrants from Adanse and Denkyera began to move southwards beyond the Pra River, carrying with them the method of state organisation that had developed in Adanse, Denkyera and Asante. The Akyem Abuakwa stool originates from a stool in Adanse under the Denkyera that offended the *Denkyerahene* (paramount chief of Denkyera) and fled beyond the Pra, establishing its capital at Banso and then finally at Kyebi. The

Kotoku stool originates from the Denkyera-Miriem stool that fled from Denkyera following its defeat by Asante. The Bosome stool was a Denkyera stool, that following the defeat of Asante, came under the rule of Asante and then later decided to leave to Akyem Swedru (Field, 1948).

These migrations took place in a period of increasing militarisation and expansion of settlements. Wilks (1982;1993) and Kea (1982) have argued that the origins of the present *aman* in the forest zone of Ghana lie in expansion of the wealthy *birempong* (big men or lords) into the auriferous districts during the early seventeenth century. The *birempong* opened up new agricultural settlements to support a mining economy with a large base of retainers and slaves, and established political domains over the areas they opened up. Free settlers were able to gain usufructuary rights in the land in exchange for allegiance and the payment of a range of levies, including services, taxes and military service. By the seventeenth century, this process of settlement expansion was marked by intense competition and *birempong* organisation became increasingly militarised. The *levee en masse* became a major feature of allegiance. These developments encouraged political predation in which stronger *birempong* subjugated their weaker neighbours and weaker *birempong* submitted and gave their fealty to the more powerful. Field (1948:62) describes such a process in Akyem Kotoku:

The *Dabenhene's* stool in Oda was originally the stool of a group of aborigines of the Asunu clan who lived on their own land on the bank of the river Petepong near Pra-Amuena. When the migrants arrived the people joined the Omanhene's household and their head became *Dabenhene* (lord of the sleeping room) of the Omanhene.

Through this expansionary process, the weaker *birempong* emerged as village heads (*odikro*) owing allegiance to stronger lords and the strongest *birempong* emerged as *amanhene*. In the Akyem area this process of state formation resulted in the emergence of the three powerful centres of Abuakwa, Kotoku and Bosome.

From the 1650s to the 1730s, Akyem contested the rich gold lands of the Birrim valley with Akwamu. Following the defeat of Akwamu in the 1730s, Akwamu lands fell to the Akyem and the Akyem states claimed paramountcy over these lands and became heir to a large area extending from Asante to the Akuapem area (Addo-Fenning, 1975; Wilks, 1957). Although defeated by Asante in 1742 and incorporated into the Asante empire, sporadic rebellions and war prevailed in the Akyem area until the establishment of colonial rule.

Land and agriculture in Akyem

Agriculture remained largely undeveloped in Akyem up to the late nineteenth century. In a report of a trip into the Akyem area in 1882, Kirby¹ reports on the general dilapidation and poverty of the country. He describes the major economic activities as consisting of “a little oil palm making”—which was sent to Prampram, Ada and Saltpond—and gold mining. During the gold season there was a great influx of people. Field (1948:65) comments that

until recent times all the food farming was in the hands of women, the men being exclusively preoccupied with warfare ... Since warfare has stopped food farming has remained women's work and the men have concerned themselves chiefly with cocoa. All the men and many of the women have cocoa farms, the average size of an Akim-Kotoku man's cocoa farm being less than an acre.

She further states:

The Akim people, on the other hand, have much fertile land and little taste for work. They have therefore found in their land a means of making money without working for it. Sometimes they sell tracts of land outright to strangers, but more often they allow strangers the use of the land on the system known as *bu'sa* [*abusa*] (p.74).

From the second half of the nineteenth century, Akyem people began selling land to migrants. The earliest land sales were from the Begoro stool of Akyem Abuakwa to Krobo settler farmers (Amanor, 1994). These lands were used for cultivating oil palm for the export trade and Krobo was the dominant palm oil producing district in the mid-nineteenth century, supplying up to 60 per cent of Gold Coast palm oil exports (Wolfson, 1953). In a collection of Krobo oral traditions from the nineteenth century, Odonkor (1971:21) recounts:

Later on in 1862, Fenning, the chief of Begoro (Akim) who had heard that the Krobos were on the lookout for fertile land, came down himself through Dawu to Odumase and Sra to arrange trade agreements. The arrangements were effected and sealed with the drinking of fetish between the Begoro chief on the one side and Ologo and Azu [the chiefs of Yilo and Manya Krobo] on the other side. The Krobos now penetrated far into the upper-country and brought land freely from the Akims.

Later on, Chief Fenning was destooled. A similar fate met one of his successors, Chief Gyamara of Begoro, who was destooled in 1913 for selling land

¹. “Itinerary of Brandon Kirby”, Enclosure 2 in Dispatch no.14, 24 January 1882, in Dispatches from Governor to Secretary of State, Jan 1882 to March 1882, Ghana National Archives, ADM 1/645.

indiscriminately to the Krobos.¹ One of the major complaints against him was that he had no right to sell many of these lands because they were important to the inhabitants of Begoro for collecting snails. This shows the extent of the land of the Akyems at this time—much of this land was hunting ground rather than farmland.

The neighbouring Akuapem farmers had begun experimenting with cocoa cultivation on the Akuapem Ridge in the 1880s. Aware of the impending shortage of suitable land for cocoa farming in Akuapem, they had begun moving across the Densu river into Akyem lands in the 1890s and were purchasing land from the chiefs of Apapam and Apedwa. These lands were sparsely inhabited. They were mainly used by hunters and lay far away from the towns that claimed ownership. With an underdeveloped agricultural sector, the Akyem Abuakwa chiefs were unable to utilise these lands for agriculture and were happy to sell them outright to Akuapem farmers. In the early years of purchase, the migrant farmers were able to gain huge tracts of many square miles. By 1900, as cocoa proved profitable, a scramble for land developed in many Akyem areas. Many other people had joined the cocoa migration, including Krobo, Shai, and Ga farmers. By 1918, most of the lands of Apapam and Apedwa had been sold and the migrant farmers moved westwards towards Asamankese and into Akyem Kotoku (Hill, 1963). A second movement into the Akyem area involved Dwaben refugees from Asante after the early nineteenth century. Many of the early settlers were granted land freely. But by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as relations deteriorated between Dwaben migrants and their Akyem overlords, and as land increasingly acquired a commodity value, many of the migrants were purchasing land or hiring it on sharecrop terms (Addo-Fenning, 1978).

As a result of this early expansionary movement, a large proportion of the land in Akyem Abuakwa was alienated to migrant farmers. Danquah (1928:213) writes:

[T]here are overwhelming instances in which stools owning large tracts of good virgin forest lands have sold away, so that even at this early date some towns are hard pressed for small lots of lands on which the inhabitants are to cultivate their annual foodstuffs plantations. It used to be said that lands about three miles away from a town might be safely sold without danger of the inhabitants starving for land.

In An Epistle to the Educated Youngman in Akim Abuakwa, Danquah (1928a) further comments:

¹. "Enquiry into the charges against Chief Jamara, Ohene of Begoro" Begoro Native Affairs, Ghana National Archives, ADM 11/457, case no. 21 of 1913.

About 98 per cent of the land from the Densu at Nsawam to Densuso (Apedwa) has all been sold away absolutely for all time ... Lands to the left and right of the Nsawam-Densuso road to a distance of 10–25 miles on either side have been sold. The same tale can be told in the Eastern part of the State [Akyem Abuakwa] on the Krobo boundary; the same tale is now going on in the Northern boundary of the State round about Asuom and you are of course aware that the town of Oda (capital of Western Akim) and surrounding villages are situate on land sold by Akim Abuakwa.

In the 1960s Hunter (1963), estimated that 98.6 per cent of the land in the New Suhum (trans-Densu area) was being cultivated by migrants.

By the 1920s, the structure of land relations and transactions began to change. While the early chiefs were unable to exploit the agricultural potential of their land, by the 1920s the wealth brought by cocoa cultivation was fabled. The migrant cocoa farmers had also exported cocoa labourers to the Akyem area. In the early period of creating cocoa plantations, labourers were paid largely in cash and often employed on an annual basis, receiving their wages at the end of the year. The farmer provided them with tools, clothes, food and sometimes advances of money (Hill, 1956). In some instances, those who had rendered good service to their masters were rewarded with plots of land.¹ As cocoa began to mature and become productive, the annual labourer was replaced by the *abusa* labourer, who received a third share of the crop he tended and harvested, and the *nkotokoano* labourer who received a fixed sum of cash for the number of loads he harvested. The annual labourer was usually used in creating cocoa plantations in new frontier areas and the *abusa* and *nkotokoano* labourer employed in tending established cocoa farms (Hill, 1956). The early labourers were largely drawn from less well-off migrants who could not afford to buy land and cocoa seeds. People from particular areas in which capital accumulation was not well developed also entered the cocoa economy as labourers, such as from Shai, Anum, the Volta Region and the Northern Territories.

As the supply of labour increased within the Akyem areas, the chiefs were able to gain revenue by entering into cocoa production through arrangements with migrant labour rather than through the sale of land. The *abusa* system provided the channel through which this was achieved. Virgin land was contracted to the migrant farmer on the basis that the tenant provided the landowning chief with one-third of the cocoa crop when it

¹ In discussions at Kofi Pare, a migrant Akuapem settlement situated in the trans-Densu area, on the transmission and inheritance of land, some people recounted how Kofi Pare had rewarded some of his labourers for their service with small plots of land. Similarly, at Odometa in the Manya Krobo area, on land personally acquired by Konor Emmanuel Mate Kole, small plots were also allocated to those who “had served him well” on his cocoa plantation at Dawa (Amanor, 1994).

matured. A second variant involved the sharing of land, in which the chief took one-third of the cocoa land and the farmer two-thirds. Many other variants of this system have come into being. In some areas, as land has become increasingly scarce, the system of *abusa* or third shares has been replaced by *abunu* or half shares, in which the tenant receives a half share of the crop instead of the original two-thirds share.

By the 1920s, colonial policy had created labour reserves in the north from which people migrated to the south to work on cocoa plantations and in the gold mines. This large supply of labour in search of work rather than land enabled the *abusa* system to become the dominant productive relationship in the cocoa industry. As an informant in Akyem Kotoku told Field (1948:67), "The selling of land to strangers is not good and we don't allow people to sell. Nor is it good for a town to sell its uncleared forest, but in lawsuits and troubles towns have to do it. But to let strangers work land by *abusa* is good".

The rapid expansion of cocoa land sales in Akyem alarmed the colonial government and in the 1920s it stepped in to create public lands in the form of forest reserves for environmental protection. The Akyem area became a major focus for the creation of forest reserves, and possibly a larger proportion of land in this area lies under forest reserves than in other areas. This was to result in a growing land shortage, since public land was not put aside to meet the agricultural needs of future generations.

In the post-war period, a third phase was opened up in agrarian relations of production in the Akyem area. *Abusa* became internalised and was transformed from a relationship between migrant labourers and landholding citizens to embrace local citizens suffering from land shortages. The youth from families without sufficient land to meet their own needs began to seek land on an *abusa* basis from other sections. In some cases, *abusa* came to define the productive relationship between fathers and sons among the matrilineal Akan people. In the matrilineal system, property is transmitted from mother's brother (*wofa*) to mother's children. In recent years a system has evolved in which land may be solicited by a son from his father's matrilineage and a third share of the crop is returned to the matrilineage for the use of the land (Hill, 1956:129fn; Okali, 1983:115–118; Robertson, 1987: 72). This land can be passed on to their children but the children also inherit the *abusa* contract. This arrangement is not only used by those who are landless but also by those with a large supply of matrilineal land wishing to secure land for the use of their children in the future. In some instances, the terms of *abusa* given to patrilineal relatives compare favourably with those that pertain to strangers. The duration before payment of the third share begins may be longer and the relative may only have to provide a third share (*abusa*) instead of a half share (*abunu*). Matrilineages (*mmusua*) with large

supplies of land are willing to build on such relationships with wealthy patrilineal (father's side) relatives to develop cocoa and oil palm plantations, since it assures them a source of revenue (see box 3.1). Nevertheless, this relationship also creates pressures on other members of the matrilineage who face growing land shortages.

Box 3.1 *Abusa* within the Family

Nana Frimpong Manso the Nifahene of Ntronang is an *abusuahene*—the land administrator for his matrilineage. He is prosperous and owns a bar and a corn mill. As *abusuahene* he controls a piece of land of about 100 acres from his mother's side, which he shares with three sisters. His father also left him 40 acres at Kodobeda. However, this is farmed on an *abusa* basis, since he has no direct rights to the land in the matrilineal system. The land is used for planting orchard crops, including 2.5 acres of oil palm and 30 acres of cocoa. After 10 years, he will start sharing the produce with his father's *abusua*. He intends to pass the plantations he has developed to his children. They too will continue to pay a third share of the produce to the landowners.

Altogether, he has 30 acres under cocoa, 16.5 acres under oil palm, 5.5 acres under citrus and 7 acres under cola. On his mother's land he has given out 60 acres on *abunu* (half share to the landowner), 40 acres to one friend and 10 acres each to two others. Land acquired on the mother's side cannot be passed on to his children, but the land acquired on the father's side can be passed on but the *abusa* contract will continue.

The matrilineal system of inheritance is flexible. It provides individuals with several nodes of contact through which they can inherit land. It also provides the family elders with a choice of a large number of heirs. The bulk of the land is not shared equitably, but put under the administration of "responsible" and wealthy individuals, who will put it to good account and gain revenue for the family. The successful heirs will be those who serve their mother's brothers well and are effective in petitioning them for land. Heirs will spend a long apprenticeship as "youngmen" (*mmerante*), running errands for their elders and looking after their farms. Those that are most successful may find themselves being made responsible for large areas of land which they inherit from different relatives. While they will allocate portions of this land to other members of the matrilineage, they will be able to develop large areas of plantation for themselves and give out lands on *abusa*, as long as they provide the family with revenues. The farmers in the elder generation who have significant landholdings frequently have a hold over the youth and can gain access to their labour and services. The youth often spend many years farming without rights in land. As a result of this,

many of the youth have to supplement their incomes by hiring themselves out as casual farm labour.

In the contemporary period, many rural areas within the forest are no longer dependent on migrant labour for the creation and preservation of cocoa farms, and internal processes of social differentiation have broken down the autonomy of the household as a unit of production. Many households within the community provide labour for the large landowners as sharecrop tenants. Many youth hire themselves out as casual labour, since their household cannot provide them with sufficient land for farming. The youth are no longer dependent on household land for farming and the household head cannot depend upon their labour and has to hire casual labour from outside.

Cropping systems

The main cropping systems comprise forest food crops and orchard crops. The most important food crops are mixtures of plantain, cassava, cocoyam, maize and yams, to which other minor crops may be added. A maize and cassava intercrop is the second most important food cropping system. In wetland valleys, rice may also be grown. The main orchard crops are cocoa, oil palms, citrus and cola. Cola trees are usually planted in the shelter of cocoa plantations, but around New Abirem and Mamaso cola is often planted in pure stands.

In the early part of the century, cocoa was the dominant crop. Cocoa seedlings were usually planted on old food crop farms. Plantains, cocoyams and cassava acted as shade crops under which young cocoa was nurtured. As the cocoa began to establish itself, forest trees were preserved to create an upper canopy above the cocoa to give shade and maintain the moist conditions in which *amelonado* cocoa thrived.

Cocoa production went into crisis in the Eastern Region in the 1950s when *amelonado* was decimated by swollen shoot disease. The only solution was to destroy infected trees and replant with new hybrid varieties that are resistant to the disease. These hybrid varieties are quick maturing. They produce cocoa pods from the second to third years, but they are not hardy. They are highly vulnerable to a number of diseases if the farms are not sprayed regularly with both insecticides and fungicides. The cost of establishing a modern cocoa plantation is high, involving the purchase of hybrid seeds and of pesticides and spraying machines, and increased outlays for weeding. Weeding requirements have become much higher as a result of the spread of the *Chromolaena odorata* weed (popularly known as *acheampong* after the head of state during whose rule it spread). *Chromolaena* is a serious weed from tropical areas that often colonises the forest and grows rapidly to

replace the original vegetation. It has spread largely from the Ivory Coast, where it was introduced as a cover crop in forest plantations. It has become a serious weed in cocoa and oil palm plantations where it rapidly outgrows the orchard crops and results in the need for constant weeding (Amanor, 1966).

As a result of increasing costs of production, many farmers are unable to establish successful cocoa plantations. They plant seeds from hybrid varieties that they have collected from trees and which do not breed true, because they lack the money to buy certified seeds. Because they are unable to carry out the necessary spraying of their farms with pesticides, the result is large crop losses to disease. They are unable to maintain their farms free of weeds resulting in both poor yields from weed competition and the spread of disease vectors. With poor producer prices in the 1970s and declining world market cocoa prices in the 1980s, the profits realised from cocoa have not reflected the increasing amount of capital expended in its production. As a result of declining profits and increasing capital outlays for successful cocoa production, many farmers have switched to food crops. While food crops can be profitable, they need to be cultivated on a large-scale before significant profits can be realised. Moreover, land is scarce in the moist forest areas of the Eastern Region. Food crops, such as plantain, cocoyam and cassava are highly perishable and bulky and these factors make it difficult for farmers to negotiate good farmgate prices with traders. Consequently, cocoa still tends to be the preferred crop when farmers have adequate capital or sources of loans.

Despite increases in cocoa producer prices, the removal of subsidies on inputs has not alleviated the high cost of entering cocoa production for many farmers. Many cocoa farmers are now cultivating on a small scale, gradually extending their plantations from year to year. Other farmers with sources of capital have chosen to move from cocoa into the cultivation of modern oil palm hybrid varieties and citrus. Although these do not require the prohibitively expensive cocoa pesticides, the costs of seeds and labour for plantation development inhibit a large number of farmers from taking up these crops.

In recent years, a number of new plantation crops have been promoted by government as part of the drive to increase non-traditional exports, including cashew, black pepper and new hybrid (tissue culture) cola varieties.

The oil palm sector and agribusiness

Within the Akyem area, one of the most significant developments in recent years has been the creation of oil palm plantations and an infrastructure that

has supported the development of agribusiness and contract farming. During the 1960s, a significant technical infrastructure of state oil palm plantations and the Oil Palm Research Institute at Kusi was created. This provided technical recommendations and high-yielding hybrid seeds. With growing interest in the agribusiness production of palm oil, the Akyem area was a natural place to establish an oil palm project, and in 1976 the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation (GOPDC) was born with World Bank funding. The site selected for this project was in the Kwae area and required the expropriation of 9,000 hectares that were being cultivated by about 7,000 peasants. This land was acquired under the Stool Lands Act of 1962 and conferred permanent ownership on the state. The land was then leased to GOPDC for 50 years.

At Kwae town, the elders narrate how the government approached the *Okyenhene* (paramount chief of Akyem Abuakwa) at Kyebi for the acquisition of this land and he pinpointed the stools of Kwae, Asuom, Minta, Anweam, and Maman-Antobiri as the area in which the concession could be granted. At Kwae, the chief agreed to the project and a section of the people agreed with him, but another section was against the idea of giving up their land. Promises of bringing a modern infrastructure, modern village sites with concrete houses, electricity and running water, new wealth, better agriculture, and jobs at the plantation site were made to whet the appetites of the people. But in the project documents, none of these developments was envisaged. The main benefits envisaged for local people were employment for about 200 farmers and 600 staff and labourers and a rising standard of living from improved oil palm production (Daddieh and Jonah, 1987; Graham, 1993; Gyasi, 1992)

In search of tangential benefits, the chiefs of the village drew up their own list of demands that the project should satisfy. These clearly reflected the narrow interests of the chiefs rather than the community, although they involved improvements both for the chiefly office and community infrastructure. The demands included:

- the construction of five new palaces for the five chiefs, the granting of 20 acres (8 hectares) of GOPDC *smallholder* land to the five chiefs, annual presentation of gifts (sheep, bottles of schnapps, cash donations and oil palm fruits) to each of the chiefs at the *Afahye* and *Ohum* festivals, annual royalty payments to each of the stools, the erection of a two-metre wall around the royal cemetery at Kwae, and the creation of a health post for the Minta royal family;
- rehabilitation of schools at Maman-Antobiri and Anweam, electrification of Asuom, Kwae, Anweam, establishment of pipe-borne water for Kwae and Anweam, construction of market place and public toilets at

Anweam, provision of community centres in Anweam, provision of transport facilities between Anweam and the GOPDC plantation, provision of secondary school scholarships to deserving pupils in the towns, preferential job opportunities at the plantation site for citizens of the five towns (quoted in Daddieh and Jonah, 1987).

In addition, the inhabitants of Kwae whose village was situated within the concession, were expecting GOPDC to resettle them in a modern settlement, built in the fashion of the bungalows at the project site (Gyasi, 1992).

The process of expropriation was carried out hurriedly without taking into consideration its impact on the livelihoods of the population, nor were the procedures for payment of compensation, as laid down in law, followed (Graham, 1993; Gyasi 1992).

The issue of compensation was complicated by rival claims within the community. The chiefs claimed that compensation for the allodial rights in the land should be paid to them rather than the individual farmers since they were the landowners. The *Okyenhene* claimed that the compensation rights in land should be paid to him as the overlord, rather than to the town chiefs. The town chiefs disagreed. As a result of this dispute, the state was able to pay compensation only to the farmers for the loss of economic crops destroyed in the process of expropriation. The state was only prepared to pay compensation for land to farmers who could establish proof of ownership through title deeds. Since farm lands have not been registered, this in effect meant that no farmers would get compensation for land. No compensation has been paid to the stools because of disagreement among the chiefs about their rights to the land. In the disbursement of compensation for the destruction of crops cocoa farms received the most, while those with food crops gained the least. This in effect meant that the women and youth suffered the most, since these are the categories of the population that focus most on food crop production. No provision was made for those expelled from the land to find alternative sources of land or livelihood, with the exception of the 200 farmers who were incorporated into the project as *smallholders*.¹ The small moneys that were paid as compensation have been

¹. The Kwae Project differentiates two categories of contract farmers. *Smallholders* refers to contract farmers who were resettled on the Kwae concession on land now belonging to the company. Outgrowers refers to farmers who have entered contract farming arrangements with GOPDC on their own land. GOPDC provides them with loans for the establishment of oil palms and in return the farmers undertake to sell all their produce to GOPDC. In the text, *Smallholder* (in italics) is used to denote the GOPDC meaning of the word in contrast with smallholder (in normal font) denoting a small farmer.

frittered away without any productive gains for the majority of farmers. Migrant farmers who had purchased land lost their investment.

After realising their loss, the communities reacted by petitioning the lands department to demand compensation for the land. Some communities, such as migrant farmers at Atobriso and Okaikrom, have also refused to allow the Kwae authorities to enter their lands. Other farmers have taken to squatting on undeveloped parts of the plantation, such as at Kwae. which they refuse to vacate. As a result of these action GOPDC has not been able to use 4,400 hectares of their concession.

Box 3.2 A popular history of the Kwae Project

The chief of Kwae said that the *Okyenhene* at Kyebi asked for the release of land for an oil palm project. A *gong-gong* was beaten to inform the people. They were divided on the issue. But they told the *Okyenhene* that they should be allowed to come to Kwae to plant oil palms. Two white men called Pagya and Marco Polo (?) came here in 1970 and started the research. They started planting in 1976. *Gong-gong* was beaten saying that if you are interested in oil palm cultivation, register your land. Some went and others did not. So far no compensation has been paid for land taken away. The new management at the company is interested in taking the remaining land on which we are working. The lands department has come to survey this land this year. (Informal discussion with some elders, Kwae, May 1996.)

Organisation of GOPDC and linkages with farmers

The GOPDC or Kwae Project was initiated as a joint Ghana government and World Bank project in the early 1970s. However, the management contract in the initial phase was given out to Institut de Recherche pour les Huiles et les Oleagineux (IRHO), which also carried out the feasibility study. IRHO is a French company that is heavily involved in oil palm development in Ivory Coast in both supplying management expertise and suitable hybrid seeds. In 1994, the Kwae Project was divested and is now run by SAIT Ghana, with a 51 per cent of the share owned by SAIT Belgium and 49 per cent by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SNITT) of Ghana. Since SNITT is a quasi-government parastatal organisation, this arrangement does not radically differ from the joint state-foreign agribusiness schemes of the mid-1970s. SNITT also has large investments in real estate.

The Kwae Project is organised in three sectors. The first consists of a nucleus oil palm estate and mill covering 3,500 hectares. The second consists of *smallholders* or contract farmers that have been resettled on 1,051 hectares of expropriated land under the control of GOPDC. The initial contract farmers were supplied with 8 hectares (20 acres) of land of which 7 hectares

was for the cultivation of oil palm and one hectare was available for food crop cultivation. If they fail to cultivate the land according to the laid down procedures of GOPDC, the contract farmers can be ejected from the concession. The third sector consists of outgrowers who have voluntarily joined the project with their own land. The target area for outgrowers is a radius of 25 kilometres around the nucleus plantation.

By the end of 1996, 5,500 hectares of mature, fruit-producing palm trees were being cultivated by outgrowers. While *smallholders* farm on the land of the Kwae Project and outgrowers on their own land, the terms of the agreement are essentially the same. The major difference is that when outgrowers have paid their debt they can do whatever they like with the land and the palm trees. At the end of the contract, the outgrowers can fell their plantations to make palm wine for distilling into *akpeteshie* spirit, which yields a lucrative income since one tree can be sold to a palm wine tapper for ₵13,000 (\$8). In contrast, on *smallholder* plots, the trees and land belong to GOPDC, and they come in to clear the trees with a bulldozer at the end of their productive lifespan, then they fertilise the land for one year before planting new seedlings. *Smallholders* pay GOPDC a nominal rent of ₵100 per annum.

In its agreement with *smallholders* and outgrowers, the Kwae Project undertakes to supply them with seedlings, two bags of fertiliser for the first three years, Wellington boots, implements, wire nets to protect the young seedlings against rodents, money for hiring labour, *Preruria* seeds for establishing a cover crop under the oil palm and farm implements. The Kwae Project also undertakes to collect fruits from the farmer at the farmgate and the farmers undertake to market all their oil palm crop through GOPDC at prices determined by GOPDC. The farmer is expected to begin repaying the cost of this loan after a six-year grace period, and compound interest is based on rates of interest levied by the Agricultural Development Bank, which at present are as high as 40%. During the seventh and eighth year, the accrued interest on the loan is repaid and from the ninth year the principal and further interest begins to be deducted. After this initial loan, the company also supplies additional loans in fertiliser, which are repaid after a three-year grace period. The interest is deducted from payments to farmers for their crop. This deduction is popularly seen by farmers as a variant of the *abusa* system and many of them describe the contract in terms of *abusa*. This is emphatically denied by GOPDC, but they admit that loan deductions could account for about 20 per cent of a farmer's harvest.¹ Given that this is likely to be a conservative estimate, the actual sum may not be that much less than the one-third deduction under *abusa*.

¹. Interview with Mr. J.C.E. Inkumsah, Corporate Director, GOPDC, 7 October 1996.

These developments hark back to the colonial era of mercantile control over cocoa production and the operation of usurers' capital. Beckett (1945:1) noted that at Koransang in the early days of cocoa, seed pods were sold at 10 shillings each. Farmers who could not afford to purchase seeds were offered them on the basis that they delivered one-third of their crop in payment for the seeds. However, after "five or six years, the usurious nature of this arrangement was realised and further demands for payment were not made".

The terms of the contract give GOPDC the rights "to allow the employees, servants or agents of GOPD [GOPDC] access to all parts of the farm for the purpose of inspection of oil palm and advising on all problems of oil palm planting and all matters related thereto" (GOPDC Outgrower Contract at Ntronang, 1992). The agreement also gives GOPDC the right to take over the management of the farm if the outgrower fails to honour the agreement:

If the Outgrower fails to manage the Farm in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement, or to harvest oil palm fruit when necessary, GOPD shall have the right to hire labour to do the same and charge the outgrower accordingly with the cost (GOPDC Outgrower Contract, Ntronang 1992).

This in effect makes the GOPDC contract akin to a mortgage, in which the farmers pledge their land to the corporation until they have repaid the loan. By delaying repayment to the seventh year and charging compound interest during this grace period, the company is assured of its control of farmers' production of palm fruits during the period when the tree begins to bear fully. By the time the farmer has finished paying off the loan, the oil palm trees have become old and yields are declining.

This measure of control over farmers' production can be seen in the recent elaboration of a fertiliser scheme. This has arisen in response to production differentials between the nucleus plantation, *smallholders* and outgrowers. While the average yield on the nucleus estate is 12 tonnes per hectare, this falls to 7 tonnes per hectare on *smallholders'* plots and between 5 and 6 tonnes on outgrowers' plantations. GOPDC has identified incorrect application of fertiliser and diversion of fertiliser supplies to other crops or to the market as the major cause of disparity in yield. To correct these distortions, the company has started a new fertiliser scheme in which the fertiliser is applied directly to the oil palm plots by GOPDC. The cost of both the fertiliser and its application (labour and transport) is charged to the farmers' account.¹ The amount of fertiliser applied is also determined by the company. However, the fertiliser credit scheme is made available only to "performing farmers" (*GOPDC News*, vol.1(2), July–September 1996, p.5).

¹. Interview with Mr. J.C.E. Inkumsah, Corporate Director, GOPDC, 7 October 1996.

Given the prevalence of sharecropping (*abusa/abunu*) relations in the agrarian structure, GOPDC has also made provision for these relations in their contracts. There can be three parties to the contract: the farmer, the landowner and GOPDC. The contract provides for the division of the farmers' share into two—a one-third to the landlord and two-thirds to the tenant farmer. Thus, GOPDC has been able to build its organisation on to forms of the peasant sharecrop economy.

In selecting outgrowers GOPDC has a specific set of criteria. Applicants are interviewed to determine their suitability. The criteria include:

- suitable and appropriate land. GOPDC is now limiting outgrowers to lowland valley areas that, because of their greater moisture retention, provide higher yields of oil palms. These areas are also unsuitable for the cultivation of cassava and other food crops and GOPDC is keen to prevent the intercropping of oil palms with food;
- applicants should be married with a spouse and children to assist them in farming, and in the age range of 25–45. Within this range, the older candidates are generally preferred.

These criteria effectively exclude a large proportion of the youth and women from involvement in the project, because it is difficult for them to get access to scarce land for oil palm farming, and because the criteria for acceptance into the project are essentially based on the image of a patrifocal nuclear family headed by a male. In an interview with the Corporate Director, Mr. J.C.E. Inkumsah, he emphatically stated that a substantial number of women were operating as contract farmers, but he could not give the number. However, in defining the criteria used in selecting suitable outgrowers he stated that the applicant should have a “wife and children” to assist them. In a survey of 140 GOPDC contract farmers Daddieh (1994) noted the low proportion of women in the sample—only 13 per cent of *smallholders* were women. While the social criteria devised by the Kwae Project fit into the conception of the family farm as the centre of production, in the Kwae area nuclear families and marriages are frequently highly fractured.

The price paid to farmers for oil palm fruits is set at between 10–11 per cent of world market price for palm oil. The procedures for establishing this price were defined by the World Bank and are in conformity with the world norm for the oil palm sector. This price is also in conformity with the composition of capital in the modern agrifood system, in which on average only about 10 per cent of the value of food is produced on the farm (see Chapter one). However, this price lies well below local market prices and is about 65 per cent of the local market price. In 1996, GOPDC paid farmers ₦80,000 per tonne of fresh fruit bunches (FFB) while the equivalent local market price was ₦120,000 per tonne of fruits. This is a source of grievance

among farmers and has resulted in the diversion of fruits to the local market—a contravention of the contract with GOPDC. Frequently, farmers send the smaller fruits to local palm oil processors.

About 50 per cent of GOPDC-produced palm oil is earmarked for export. The other 50 per cent is largely directed to agro-industrial and agribusiness firms operating in the national market, such as Lever Brothers. The local consumer market is not catered to. Farmers wishing to harvest palm bunches for domestic use are supposed to get a licence from GOPDC. As a result of the massive expropriation of land for oil palm farming, food has become

Box 3.3 Farmer perceptions of GOPDC contracts at Kwae town

“The land is divided into four. The company takes one share, one share goes to the landlord and two shares to me. That of the company is not actually one part but deductions for an eleven year period”. Faith Dzomeku

“The company supplies the farmer with seedlings to plant, fertiliser, a cutlass, boots and money known as ‘maintenance allowance’ to weed the farm. When the fruits mature you begin to share with the company. But if a farmer is caught making diversions of fruit you will be taken to court”. Kwasi Boateng

“They give you seedlings, and a hoe, cutlass, Wellington boots and wire net with which to plant the seedlings. They also give us a maintenance allowance of ₵7,000 per acre, after which they deduct them all from my produce”. Obeng Kwakye

“They give an operation allowance of ₵40,000 for five acres. I take all the produce for the first five years and in the sixth year we share it on *abusa*”. Collins Adoma

“I was given seedlings and fertiliser on loan. I am allowed to take all the produce for the first five years. After five years the company will start deducting my loan by taking an *abusa* share of the produce until my bill is paid off”. Adwoa Borowaa

“They give us seedlings, yearly labour cost, fertiliser and say that during harvest they will share the palm fruit *abusa* to pay off the loan”. Eric Okuru

“They supply us with seedlings to plant, a cutlass and maintenance allowance and after five years you start to sell the fruits to the company till you finish paying the loan. The company does not make it clear to the farmer when they will finish paying their loan or debt, so it’s cheating”. Kwaku John

“The company gives us smallholders land and is deducting yearly from our yield. It is not fair because they do not give us our bill in advance but keep on deducting yearly from our produce”. Grace Agyepong

“For smallholders, the company gives you the land on a hiring basis of ₵100 per year. They also give you seedlings and loans to use in planting the seedlings. You have to sell all the produce to the company and they deduct the cost of all your inputs”. Andrews Asiri Abosi

scarce and very expensive in the Kwae area. This has been reflected in the demands of the *Smallholder/Outgrower Association, Kwae (SHAK)* for food aid (Daddieh, 1994).

In its operations, GOPDC has been able to engage with the local farming economy. It has used several means by which it is able to mesh with local agrarian structures and subsume them under its production plan. Its essential contact point with outgrowers has been in the provision of loans in kind, which have effectively mortgaged or pledged the farmers' land and labour. These loans have enabled GOPDC to establish a trade monopoly and dictate the price of palm oil at internationally determined prices rather than those prevailing on the market. Although these relations have an uncanny resemblance to usury and the operation of mercantile capital, they equally reflect the operations of modern finance capital. Unlike the operation of mercantile capital in the cocoa economy of the 1920s, the Kwae Project has transformed production and resulted in much higher yields than were realised in the past.

The Kwae Project and social differentiation

The Kwae Project has had a differential effect on the population in its area of operation. Within its 25 kilometre area of operation, there are mixed feelings about GOPDC. While many farmers are clamouring to become outgrowers on the periphery, in the nuclear area some farmers favour its operation, some feel bitter, and others have mixed feelings. This section explores the different pressures within the agricultural system that influence farmers' perceptions of the project, farmers' participation in the project and the organisation of forms of resistance. This is explored through a survey of the conditions of production at Kwae town, which is one of the early settlements that had its land expropriated, and Ntronang, a settlement in which outgrower schemes have been established from the mid-1980s.

Model planters and night harvesters at Kwae

In 1984, Kwae had a population of 1,594 in 188 houses (Ghana Population Census, 1984). The town has electricity, but this is not supplied by GOPDC. It has many bars and stores with a wide range of commodities—more akin to Accra or a large town than a deeply rural one.

The town is situated very close to the Kwae plantation and lies within the GOPDC concession. Many people have lost their land to the company, but others still have land. There is a third area of land that was earmarked for GOPDC, but which has not been converted into plantations. As a result of the dispute over compensation, Kwae people have refused to surrender this land and many of the landless are farming there.

The small farmer sector

A survey was carried out of 80 farmers including 46 (57 per cent) men and 34 (43 per cent) women. The sample was relatively young, with 46 per cent of the farmers between 25 and 35 years old. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of land in this sample. Most holdings are less than 20 acres. The majority of women have less than 5 acres of land in total, while many men have between 10 and 20 acres. This sample is perhaps biased towards those with land. Those without land are most likely underrepresented, since a survey of land relations in agriculture naturally disposes itself towards those with land, and those without land feel they have nothing to contribute or gain from taking part in such a survey. This survey more accurately reflects the conditions of small farmer production than of problems of access to land in Kwae town.

Most people at Kwae get land through their families. Fifty-nine per cent of the sample got land from their matrilineages, 24 per cent from their fathers, 4 per cent got land from both parents, 9 per cent gained land from sharecropping arrangements on the *abusa* basis, 18 per cent gained land as GOPDC *smallholders* and 2.5 per cent hired land for cash. On 119 plots that were planted in the 1995/96 season, 70 per cent of the plots were acquired from relatives, 8 per cent were temporarily lent by relatives, 16 per cent were contracted on a sharecrop basis, 3 per cent were hired from other farmers, and 4 per cent were hired from GOPDC under a *smallholder* contract (see table 3.1). Among women, access to land is less secure with 18 per cent of them depending on temporarily loaned land for their farming activities. Wives of smallholders often depended on the one hectare (2.5 acres) allocated by the Kwae Project for food production as their farms. However, this does not make allowance for the need to fallow land. Another source of land for women—which indicates the scarcity of land—was young oil palm plantations on which male relatives allowed them to plant food crops.

The main source of access to family land for farmers was through their mother (21.5 per cent), mother's brother (17.7 per cent), from maternal grandmothers (8 per cent) and a combination of mother and grandmother (5 per cent). Most people got rights to use land rather than inheriting control over the land. Twenty-eight per cent of the farmers claimed to have inherited the land while 72 per cent were allocated land by senior family members. While only 9 per cent of the women claimed inherited land, 37 per cent of the men claimed to have inherited their land. A significantly greater number of women than men relied on their mothers to provide them with land. Women frequently got land from their mothers because they worked together in farming, pooling resources and capital (Bortei Doku Ayeetey, 1966).

Figure 3.2 Landholdings at Kwae

Table 3.1 The source of new plots cleared in the 1995/6 season

Land source	women	men	total
	%	%	%
inherited	5	20	15
given for use	55	54	55
sharecrop on <i>abusa</i>	3	18	13
sharecrop on <i>abunu</i>	-	4	3
hired	5	1	3
temporarily loaned	18	3	8
allowed to plant food crops within a relative's oil palm plantation	3	-	1
GOPDC <i>smallholder</i>	13	-	4
no of farm plots	40	79	119

The main crops planted on new farms are food crops. In 1995/6, 60 per cent of farmers planted an intercrop of plantain, cassava and cocoyams. The second most important food cropping system was maize and cassava, which accounted for 9 per cent of new farm plots. Orchard crops were planted by 22 per cent of the sample in 1995/6, of which the most popular crop was citrus, planted by 12 per cent of farmers, followed by oil palm, planted by 10 per cent, and cocoa planted by only 1 per cent of farmers. However, behind these figures lies a great discrepancy between men and women. Only 5 per

cent of the women planted orchard crops, as compared to 30 per cent of the men. All the women were planting citrus crops.

Table 3.2 Source of family land on new plots

Source of land	women	men	total
	%	%	%
mother	38	28	32
maternal grandmother	16	18	17
father	13	17	15
maternal uncle	16	25	22
maternal grandfather	-	7	5
spouse/ affines	9	1	4
sister	3	-	2
paternal uncle	3	-	1
mother's sister	-	2	1
no of farm plots	21	43	64

Sixty-nine per cent of the sample had mature orchards including 53 per cent of the women and 80 per cent of the men. Mature oil palm orchards were owned by 57 per cent of farmers, including 40 per cent of the women and 67 per cent of the men. Mature citrus orchards were owned by 20 per cent of farmers including 12 per cent of the women and 26 per cent of the men. Mature cocoa plantations were owned by 10 per cent of the sample including 6 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men. Thus, women have fewer openings for establishing orchards.

Table 3.3 Main crops grown on new plots in the 1995/6 year at Kwae

Crops planted	women	men	total
Plantain intercropped with cassava, cocoyam, maize, yams	85	48	60
Maize and cassava	5	11	9
Vegetables	5	3	3
Rice	-	1	1
Sole oil palm	-	3	2
Oil palm intercropped with food crops	-	10	7
Sole citrus	-	6	4
Citrus intercropped with food	5	8	7
Citrus and oil palm	-	1	1
Cocoa intercropped with food crops	-	1	1
Others	-	8	5
Total number of farm plots	40	79	119

Fifty per cent of the sample had contracts with GOPDC for the production of oil palm, of which 34 per cent were outgrowers and 15 per cent *smallholders*. Thirty-eight per cent of the women had contracts as compared to 59 per cent of the men. However, many women who claimed to have contracts were basing the claim on their husband's land and husband's contract. Eighteen per cent of the women claimed to be *smallholders* as compared to 13 per cent of the men. Twenty-one per cent of the women claimed to be outgrowers as compared to 44 per cent of the male farmers. Many of the women *smallholders* were the wives of men who had been given the *smallholder* contract and were farming together with their husbands on the *smallholder* land. As pointed out above, they often work the one hectare allocated for food crop production. Few farmers are able to establish palm orchards independently of GOPDC—87 per cent of farmers with oil palm orchards have outgrower or *smallholder* contracts with GOPDC.

The data on crops planted on new farms suggest a shift from oil palm to citrus, which probably reflects growing dissatisfaction with the terms of GOPDC outgrower contracts, sour relations with GOPDC, and difficulty in finding capital to grow modern oil palm varieties independently. Although farmers have more mature oil palm orchards than citrus, more new planting of citrus is now occurring than of oil palm, despite GOPDC's "encouragement" and "incentives" for oil palm cultivation.

A larger proportion of oil palm farmers hire out land. Forty-five per cent of them are involved in sharecropping. On the eleven new farms cleared in 1995/6 that were planted with oil palms 27 per cent were acquired through sharecropping arrangements. Families are often reluctant to release land for oil palm or other orchard crop cultivation to young farmers, since this ties up the land for a long period of time and prevents other members from using it. In recent years, agreements are made in which young family members engaging in orchard crop cultivation give a third share of the crop back to the family as compensation for taking the land out of general use. Elders, who control the land, are able to allocate themselves portions for orchard crop development without engaging in sharecropping.

Within the system of inheritance among Kwae people, the major share of family land passes through the line of seniority in the matrilineal line. It goes from the most senior sisters' brother to the junior brothers before being inherited by the sisters' children. The inheritor of the land has powers of jurisdiction over the land and can choose how the land is used. With the increasing shortage of land, many elders have used most of the land for their own interests and have established plantations on which their sons often work. However, when they die, the next heir that takes over the land can demand that the immediate family of the deceased return the land on which the plantation was established for use by other members of the family. In

1996, there were two pending cases in which new family heads (*abusua-panyin*) had demanded that the plantations of the former family head be destroyed. Farmers are often reluctant to establish orchards on family land and prefer to lease *abusa* land.

Figure 3.3 Distribution of orchard plots

Orchard crops are recognised as more valuable than food crops, but because of the land scarcity, it is difficult for many people to engage in their cultivation, unless they are prepared to get land on a sharecrop basis. There are other costs that make entry into orchard crop production difficult, including the purchase of seeds and labour.

The major expenditure of most farmers is on hiring labour and they complain about the high cost of labour. Eighty-two per cent of farmers in the sample hired labour in weeding and 87 per cent used hired labour in clearing the farms. Ninety per cent of the women hired labour, for weeding and 78 per cent of the men. In clearing the land for planting 87 per cent of the farmers hired labour, including 88 per cent of women and 86 per cent of men. Expenditures on weeding new farms ranged up to an estimate of ₦1,300,000 with a mean of ₦95,000. However, 50 per cent of the farmers each spent less than ₦25,000 on weeding while the top 25 per cent labour-hirers each spent more than ₦99,000. Women spent significantly less on weeding than men. The mean for the women was ₦30,537 as compared to ₦142,083 for the men. However, there was also considerable differentiation between men. While 50 per cent of men each spent less than ₦55,000 on weeding, the top 25 per cent of male farmers spent more than ₦158,000 and the bottom 25 per cent of men spent less than ₦16,500 on weeding. For the women, 50 per cent

spent less than €18,000, the top 25 per cent each spent more than €32,000 and the bottom 25 per cent spent less than €14,000. Similar results are found in expenditure on land clearing, with the men spending a mean of €142,000 and women a mean of €29,500 (see table 3.4 and figure 3.4).

Table 3.4 Expenditure on labour hired for land clearance and weeding at Kwae

	Expenditure on weeding new plots			Expenditure on clearing new plots		
	25 percentile	50 percentile	75 percentile	25 percentile	50 percentile	75 percentile
Women	14,000	18,000	32,000	10,000	25,000	35,000
Men	16,500	55,000	158,500	15,000	42,000	146,250
Total	15,000	25,000	99,000	12,000	30,000	80,000

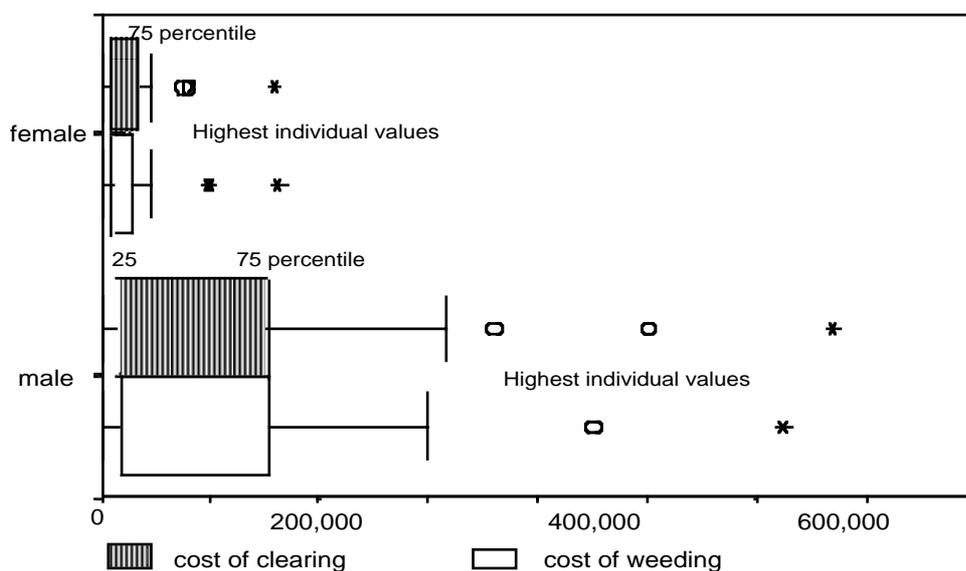


Figure 3.4 Variations in expenditure on weeding and clearing at Kwae

These variations in the amount spent on weeding and clearing mirror the variations in landholding size. They reflect social differentiation within the community and differential access to capital. While this differentiation is most obvious between men and women, it also occurs to a large degree between men, with only a few men having access to large amounts of capital and land. Differentiation cuts across lineages, with matrilineal heads being able to control access to land and command a large share of land resources at the expense of youth and women. However, the youth and women often lack the capital to farm on a large-scale and land tends to be consolidated into the hands of those with the capital to farm it.

A lack of capital forces a significant proportion of male farmers to hire themselves out as casual labour. Twenty-eight per cent of the sample hired themselves out as casual labourers including 41 per cent of the men and 8 per cent of the women. Apart from casual labouring, 44 per cent of the sample had other off-farm incomes, including 47 per cent of the women and 42 per cent of the men. Ten per cent of these off-farm incomes were in the craft and artisan sector, including seamstresses, tailors, shoe repairers and masons. Ten per cent of the sample were employed by GOPDC, including 11 per cent of the men and 9 per cent of the women. Eighteen per cent engaged in petty trading, including 32 per cent of the women and 7 per cent of the men. Three per cent of women also engage in oil palm processing. This figure is likely to be higher, since this is often an illicit activity using palm fruits that have been diverted away from the GOPDC mill—not something one casually discloses to a researcher.

In recent years, farmers have become aware of the increasing profitability of hybrid oil palm crops. However, agricultural subsidies have been removed and the seedlings are expensive and not easy to get. To plant two acres of oil palm will cost more than 360,000 (\$220). Furthermore, in order to purchase seedlings from the Oil Palm Research Institute (OPRI), one has to make a formal request in writing in advance. On top of this, the farmer will have to arrange transport. These costs lie beyond the means of most farmers, who are forced to depend on growing small amounts of food crops.

Farmers are investing increasing amounts of capital in labour to maintain farming operations. Around the corner they can see the technological treadmill of new seeds that can bring big returns, but requires large investments. They are struggling to keep up with rising living costs and feel the need for loans to help them catch up with the treadmill. Few avenues offer help and farmers feel increasingly frustrated and marginalised. This feeling is a powerful factor in encouraging many farmers to look to GOPDC as a source of loans, despite the reservations they may have about the company.

Night harvesters

For a significant proportion of the youth, the future in farming does not look bright. Agriculture offers them few prospects and land is difficult to get because it is now in the grasp of GOPDC. The Kwae Project has offered them few employment opportunities. Many of them have taken to illicit harvesting of palm bunches from the GOPDC plantation as a source of livelihood. They sleep during the day and rise in the evening. Late at night they descend on the GOPDC plantation in groups to plunder oil palm bunches. Although the plantation is covered by security guards, the youths have studied their movements and know how to evade them. Harvested bunches are conveyed to hiding places outside the plantation and then transported by lorries and

trucks out of Kwae to buyers. Some of the fruits are processed by women in Kwae who have also lost land and livelihoods to the project. At Kwae, there are two small manually operated oil palm mills, which depend on fruits supplied by outgrowers and probably also from the plantation.

The youth rationalise their nocturnal harvesting activities by saying that “they have to eat too”. They argue that the land belongs to them anyway and was taken away unfairly so they have a right to harvest the fruits. The incomes made from stealing fruit are high, much larger than they could make through small-scale food farming. GOPDC admits that stealing of fruit is a major problem on the plantation that becomes apparent from July to December when production is at its lowest, and that there have been violent confrontations between the security guards and youth.

Workers

The Kwae Project has given the opportunity to a few people to be employed as wage workers on the plantation. Others are also employed on a casual basis and paid a piece rate for collecting the loose fruits from the plantation, for which they can realise good incomes for hard work.

Serious tensions between workers from Kwae and the management of GOPDC exist. Kwae people claim that GOPDC is reluctant to employ people from the town because they have been militant and on two occasions were the main instigators of two separate demonstrations for better working conditions. Some workers also claim they were unfairly dismissed for demonstrating and have taken the case to court. Some workers express opposition to GOPDC by becoming involved in stealing palm fruits.

Box 3.4 Palm fruits thief jailed

Kwadzo Asomaning, a farmer resident at Asuom has been sentenced to six months in prison with hard labour by the Public Tribunal at Kade.

Yaw Botwe, a Power Tiller operator at the Asuom Fruit Collection Centre, who conspired to steal 940 kg of the Company’s fruits with Asomaning has been sacked by the Executives of the Collection Centre.

A statement by Mr. M. Buckman, Head of Security, said Botwe was suspected by the Security Personnel on duty at the Centre, when he came to off-load fruits. Upon a message from the Security post at the collection Centre, the security despatch rider was detailed to trail Botwe and the Power Tiller. He was arrested with Asomaning when they were in the process of loading the Power Tiller for the second trip.

Source: *GOPDC News* Vol. 1(2) July–September 1996, p. 2.

The “progressive” model farmer sector

Faced with much opposition, GOPDC is keen to promote the image of the successful contract farmer and *GOPDC News* carries articles on farmers who have become wealthy through the Kwaie Project. Box 3.5 provides examples, that show that a major concern of GOPDC is to promote a middle and rich outgrower sector that will create a wedge in the community.

Box 3.5 Model Outgrower Farmers

A 60 year old farmer, Mr. Tei Kwabena told the *GOPDC News* that he used proceeds from his 28 acres Oil Palm Outgrower farm to build a five bedroom house. When Tei Kwabena migrated to Akawani, he was initially engaged in cocoa farming until 1982, when he changed to oil palm. He said, he readily adopted the advice from GOPDC extension officers. This he said is the secret to his success. Mr. Tei Kwabena earns a yearly gross income of about 5 million cedis from oil palm. He uses about one million cedis annually for the maintenance of his farm. He is married to Agnes Tei with 8 children. He is committed to educate all his children because, as he puts it: "he has the capacity from palm oil proceeds". One of his children ... is now in sixth form.

He is said to have been very instrumental in mobilising the youth of Akawani to go into oil palm farming. He is a one man "vigilante" who arrests thieves and farmers who divert their crops.

Mr. Alex Appiah, a welder who has now become a farmer, has received a power tiller from the management of GOPDC as his award for good performance and honesty ... Mr Appiah explained that his first farm of five and a half acres was started in 1986 whilst the second of seven was cultivated in 1990. He added that he has a three acre nutmeg farm which he cultivated in 1994 and a seven acre citrus farm which was cultivated in 1995. Mr. Appiah who is able to harvest up to five and a half tonnes in the peak season and 700 kilograms during the lean season at a harvest, was grateful for the award given him.

He assured the GOPDC management that he will work even harder in the years ahead and appealed for an upward review of the purchase price of fresh fruit bunches (FFB). He noted that an increase will assist farmers to be financially capable of taking better care of farms. Mr. Appiah, who is married with three children, has resolved that he will do everything possible to keep the terms of his agreement which he signed with the company.

He referred to people involved in stealing and diversion as an ungrateful and greedy lot who are slowly but surely killing the hen that lays the golden eggs for the people in the project area.

Source: *GOPDC News* Vol. 1(2), July–September 1996

Community development

Another avenue that is being explored by GOPDC to win support among farmers is to promote community development. One of the major criticisms of GOPDC at Kwae concerns their failure to provide infrastructure for the community. In 1996 the board of directors of GOPDC approved a sum of ₪100 million to assist the towns in the area that “gave up” their lands for the project, including Kwae, Asuom, Anweam and Minta. However, this development assistance is to be tied to fruit delivery and the level of assistance granted to any of these towns will depend upon the quantity of fruits delivered by farmers. In this respect, GOPDC expects the chiefs and elders of beneficiary communities to educate their communities on the need to collaborate with the Kwae Project and to institute measures to curb the stealing and diversion of fruits (*GOPDC News*, vol.1 (2), July–September 1996).

The sum of ₪100 million (\$56,500) is clearly insufficient to carry out significant development projects in the area. However, it is a sufficiently large sum for the various communities to be pitted against each other and the chiefs and elders against the youth. By promoting chiefs and community representatives to the community development committee, GOPDC hopes to achieve some measure of social control over the towns. This may be embraced by some chiefs who see it as a way of bolstering their power that has been eroded by the sale of the land, by increasing social differentiation and by “lawless youth” responding to the increasing magnetisation of the economy.

Social differentiation

The Kwae Project has resulted in the introduction of new agricultural production techniques that create the potential for improved incomes. However, this project was not introduced to meet the needs of the rural economy or of the farming population, but to promote agribusiness. As a result, the project has had a differential effect on the population, giving rise to increasing social differentiation. Some farmers may have benefited as outgrowers but others have lost land and the right to a livelihood. The project has also resulted in increasing costs of living as the expansion of oil palm cultivation leads to declining food production and the importation of food from other areas. Costs of hiring labour have also become high. Many farmers are experiencing increased difficulty in financing production and a growing number of farmers with access to land are applying to become outgrowers, but many are rejected. Others experiencing a land shortage have become workers on the plantation and made industrial relations the arena of conflict, with the result that many Kwae people have been laid off. Others have been forced to gain their sustenance by illegally harvesting palm fruits in the plantation and have found that they can make much better incomes than by farming. The

plantation has brought troubled times to Kwae, but looking on the bright side, the youth do not think that GOPDC can continue planting oil palm trees forever. The land will eventually come back to them or their offspring. GOPDC has shown the superiority of yields of modern oil palm plantations and they have benefited—model outgrower farmers with high incomes and unemployed youth night harvesting in the plantation.

Hustling on the margins at Ntronang

Ntronang is one of the towns on the outer perimeter of the 25 kilometre-radius Kwae Project outgrower belt. The outgrower scheme was established in the late 1980s. In contrast with Kwae, farmers' perceptions here have not been coloured by the expropriation of the land, but they still have their problems.

Ntronang is an old settlement. The first settlers came from Akwamu, around Nyanoase, in the seventeenth century. In 1910, Ntronang was opened up as a gold mining centre. Europeans came to work the mines and many people thronged to Ntronang in search of employment. By the 1920s, the gold mines had gone broke. A second phase was started in 1934, but by 1948 gold production had declined and the mines were closed down.

In about 1912, Nana Kwabena Tufour Ampen I, the *okyeame* (linguist, orator or spokesperson) for the Akyem Kotoku *omanhene*, introduced cocoa to Ntronang from the Asamankese area and cocoa cultivation became the main occupation of the farming population. There has been a large influx of migrants into the area in search of cocoa land. In the 1984 census, Ntronang had a population of 2,055.

A sample of 69 farmers was interviewed at Ntronang, comprising 35 women and 34 men. Migrants were also well represented, constituting 69 per cent of the sample. The main migrants are from the Volta Region (30 per cent), from northern Ghana (27 per cent), Burkina Faso (10 per cent) and the Central Region (7 per cent). Ntronang has an Ewe section with an Ewe chief, and a Zongo section for northerners headed by the Sarkin Zongo.

The most significant sources of farmland were both allocations through the family system and sharecropped land. While 47 per cent of farmland was given out by families to their members, 36 per cent was sharecropped and 6 per cent was purchased by the user.

Sharecropping is prevalent among migrants at Ntronang—54 per cent of them sharecrop as compared to 23 per cent of the citizens. Significantly more women migrants than men sharecrop—69 per cent of migrant women sharecrop as compared to 46 per cent of migrant men. Among the citizens, 29 per cent of women obtain access to land through *abunu* as compared to 17 per

Figure 3.5 Sources of land at Ntronang

cent of men. A significant proportion of citizens are now sharecropping, suggesting that there is a growing land shortage which has arisen because of the lineage heads and chiefs giving out land to migrant farmers. A few local farmers are now landless or have insufficient land to meet their needs, while a few have large areas of land. While the majority of migrants have no land or less than five acres, local women commonly have between five and 10 acres and the majority of local men have between 10 and 20 acres.

The most significant sources of land for citizens are from fathers, and mothers' brothers for sons and from mothers and grandmothers for daughters. As a result, men tend to inherit men's farm property and women inherit women's farm property. This results in women generally working smaller areas than men, since women have less land.

Figure 3.6 Distribution of landholdings at Ntronang

The main crops planted include:

- plantain intercropped with cocoyam, cassava and maize;
- cocoa intercropped with plantain, cocoyam and cassava;
- maize and cassava;
- oil palm;
- vegetables; and
- rice in swampy areas.

Before 1983, cocoa was the main crop. Following the 1983 bush fire, which spread throughout the forest zone, most of the cocoa plantations were destroyed and farmers have experienced difficulty in reestablishing cocoa. Although cocoa is still the most important orchard crop, many of the richer farmers have converted to oil palm. Those with little capital are farming food crops, unless they can become GOPDC outgrowers. Maize and cassava have in recent years become important food crops. A significant proportion of the cocoa planted is under the care of migrants on the *abunu* system.

The main crops that are the source of *abunu* contracts are oil palm and cocoa. Thirty-seven per cent of cocoa farms are on the *abunu* system and 40 per cent of oil palm farms. This compares with only 28 per cent of plantain intercrop food farms that are on a sharecrop basis. This reflects the commercial potential of orchard crops and the fact that they take much land out of circulation for many years.

Figure 3.7 Sources of family land at Ntronang

Table 3.5 Crops planted in the Ntronang area

Crops	Locals	Migrants	Women	Men	Total
Plantain, cocoyam, cassava, maize, yams	43	21	44	29	35
cocoa with food crops	17	34	22	23	23
maize and cassava	21	14	19	18	18
oil palm	7	9	4	10	8
vegetables	3	5	2	5	4
sole maize	2	7	4	4	4
rice	-	9	-	5	3
others	7	1	5	6	5
no of farm plots	87	44	54	77	131

Only 7 per cent of the cocoa farms of local citizens were acquired on an *abunu* basis, although in a number of cases where sons acquire land from their fathers they give the father an *abunu* or *abusa* share. Half of the six oil palm plantations established by local citizens were acquired on a share contract, as were 19 per cent of plantain intercrop farms. However, only one of these plantain farms was farmed by a man and 32 per cent of plantain farms established by local women citizens were acquired on a half-share arrangement. This suggests that as land becomes more commercial and is increasingly transacted with migrants for orchard crop development on a sharecrop basis, local women begin to find land for their own food production increasingly scarce. Perhaps, this is not confined to women, but includes all sectors that do not have sufficient capital to develop orchard crops.

Land is preferentially allocated to those with capital to develop it and bring wealth to the matrilineage. If the family does not have wealthy individuals in its midst, the elders may release land on a share basis to wealthy sons and then to strangers.

Many farmers complain that they have insufficient capital to purchase hybrid seeds and the necessary inputs for successful orchard crop farming. They often buy seeds from private traders, but often these are not true hybrids. Other farmers plant seeds that they collect from hybrid trees, with disappointing results.

Fifty-seven per cent of farmers purchased seeds, 6 per cent used fertiliser and 5 per cent used pesticides on their new farm plots. The main expenditure was on labour with 57 per cent of farmers hiring labour for weeding, including 57 per cent of the women and 56 per cent of the men. Seventy-three per cent of farmers hired labour for clearing new plots, including 69 per cent of the women and 77 per cent of the men. Half of the farmers hiring labour for weeding on their new plots spent less than 40,000 while the top 25

per cent of spenders on weeding spent more than ₦110,000. The highest amount spent on weeding was ₦1.3 million. Most farmers have insufficient capital to meet their labour requirements. As at Kwae, there is considerable differentiation in expenditure on labour (see figure 3.8).

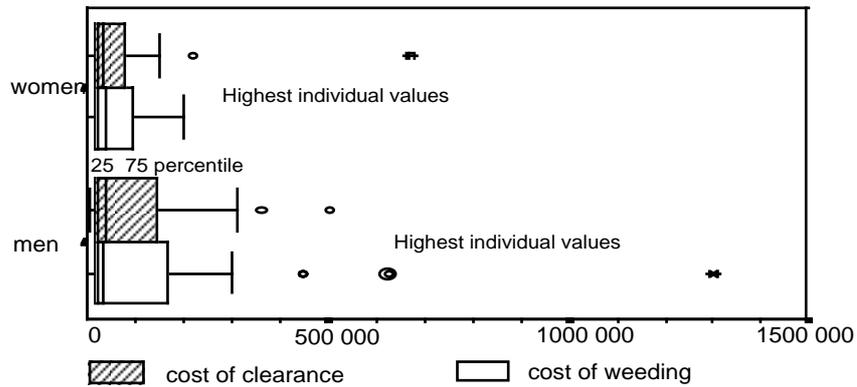


Figure 3.8 Weeding and clearing costs on new plots at Ntronang

Eighteen per cent of farmers hire themselves out as casual labourers, including 24 per cent of the men and 11 per cent of the women. Twenty-seven per cent of the migrants and 9 per cent of the local citizens hire themselves out as casual labourers. This suggests that the majority of farmers are dependent on migrants for casual farm labour. Sixty-one per cent of the farmers have other off-farm sources of income, including 71 per cent of the women and 50 per cent of the men. Sixty per cent of the women are involved in petty trading or food preparation as compared to 17 per cent of the men. Twelve per cent of the men are involved in craft or artisan activities as compared to 3 per cent of the women.

The increasing cost of cocoa production, the need for large expenditure on pesticides, and the increasing failure of the crop resulting from the inability to carry out the management requirements because of shortages of cash and inputs, has resulted in increasing frustration. Many farmers are turning to alternative orchard crops such as oil palms. However, the cost of production in this sector is also high, so many farmers are clamouring to become GOPDC outgrower farmers.

In an interview with GOPDC outgrowers in January 1996, it became apparent that many of them were unhappy with their position. The main grievance was that the GOPDC price for palm fruits was too low. News had spread that GOPDC paid farmers one-tenth of the world market price and some farmers complained that as outgrowers they received only two-thirds

of one-tenth of the going world price. Their main complaint was not the deduction of what they perceived to be an *abusa* third share, which was common in many of their own economic transactions, but the fact that this was deducted from a low price base for palm oil, well below the local market price. This was perceived as a wholesale trader monopoly. A second complaint was that, while they were bound to surrender their palm fruit yield to GOPDC, there were large delays before GOPDC trucks came to pick up the palm fruits. As a result, the fruit bunches began to dry and lose weight, resulting in even lower prices.

A small group of farmers has devised their own solution to the problem of the GOPDC monopoly. This was to create a community nursery project that provided accessible, quality orchard-crop seedlings that were affordable for all members of the community. However, they felt they needed outside technical assistance in starting the nursery and in providing capital to purchase the necessary tools, polythene bags, seeds, etc.

A second group of farmers was bitterly opposed to the position of the GOPDC contract farmers. They argued that there was nothing wrong with GOPDC and that these outgrowers were being selfish because they already had contracts with GOPDC. They did not want other farmers to join GOPDC and gain the benefits they were gaining, so they were spreading malicious lies about the GOPDC contract system to give Ntronang farmers a bad name. On subsequent visits, the divisions that appeared on that day were suppressed and the farmers were reluctant to talk badly of GOPDC. It was widely believed that our secret aim was to establish a new contract company like GOPDC and this would be welcomed because it would offer more opportunities to farmers to gain access to loans for orchard crop development, and it would offer them a choice other than the Kvae Project. If this was our aim, clearly their speaking badly of GOPDC and contract farming would not encourage us to set up at Ntronang.

The contract

Contract farming is frequently presented in the literature as an arrangement that is equitable and agreed by both parties, since they get mutual advantage from it (Watts, 1994). However, the perceptions of farmers in the Kvae area suggest that they enter into contract farming because they are highly marginalised. They are so in the sense that production has become a problem for them. In the past cocoa was easy to produce, but after swollen shoot disease and the introduction of new *amazon* hybrids, successful production has meant the purchase of expensive seeds and inputs that lie beyond the means of the great majority of farmers. The new *amazon* hybrids are highly

susceptible to black pod disease and must be sprayed regularly with fungicide and insecticide to ensure a good yield.

The expense and difficulty of cocoa management have resulted in a growing number of farmers turning to oil palms as an alternative orchard crop. Orchard crops are preferred since they secure land for the farmer over a large number of years, provide an asset that they can pass on to their heirs, and provide a possible form of collateral by which they can raise a loan. But the cost of establishing an oil palm plantation is high and there is no ready information and capital infrastructure to help farmers. Sources of institutional credit are difficult, loans have dried up and banks are increasingly unwilling to lend to farmers, claiming high rates of default. Repayment of loans by small farmers is difficult to secure since legal mechanisms for enforcing the terms of the loans and establishing collateral have not been instituted in the rural areas. In contrast, the Kwae Project offers loans and a technical support infrastructure, but it only helps those who agree to be contract farmers—who agree to sign away their autonomy and produce for the Kwae mill.

Some young farmers state that it is difficult to get land for GOPDC cultivation from their families because their families are frightened that they will lose the land to GOPDC. As S.K. Kwateng at Ntronang stated, “My family won’t let me join the company for fear that our land may be confiscated from us”. Others see the agreement as a pledge in which surplus value is appropriated for the loan, but feel the arrangement is fair because they get a share and also their land back: “Well it was agreed that we engage in *abusa* [contract farming] to clear my debt for the seedlings they gave me for six years. I think the arrangement is fair, since in the long run I will have a share and my land back in return” (J.K. Mensah, Ntronang).

The fairness of the contract is judged against prevailing relations in the general economy, in which surplus value is expropriated in a similar fashion, as a share of the fruits of one’s own labour. As Clapp (1988: 30) states, “the contract masks the underlying relation of surplus extraction by fetishising the relation between company and farmer as one of mutual obligation freely undertaken”.

The GOPDC contract specifically states the obligations of the farmer to the company, but the mechanisms for determining the price of the crop, for determining the rate of interest on the crop and the proportion of the interest deducted from the crop are left vague, at the discretion of the company and worked out using distant international formulae. The signing of the contract masks the expropriation of the farmers’ labour and their marginalisation by signalling their willingness to agree to its terms. Once signed, the contract bonds the farmer until the loan is repaid. The only avenue for redress is the *Smallholder / Outgrower Association, Kwae (SHAK)* which can appeal for

higher prices for fruit bunches but which is essentially a wing of the company that informs the outgrowers of the decisions and expectations of GOPDC. While the contract promises farmers access to modern technology, this technology does not liberate them but imposes upon them the decisions of the company. Where farmers have leeway to make their own decisions, such as in the application of the fertiliser supplied by the company, the company is continually strengthening its powers, such as in the decision to apply fertiliser directly to farmers' lands and charge them for the labour cost of application.

The company has the potential to divide farmers from within by playing upon social differentiation within the community of farmers (Watts, 1994). GOPDC achieves this by promoting the image of:

- wealthy contract farmers contrasted with many poor non-contract farmers;
- a “progressive” middle strata of wealthy contract farmers who stand apart from a poorer strata of disaffected farmers who divert their harvest;
- enthusiastic new outgrowers on the perimeters of the area of operation standing against difficult and obstructive communities that have “given up” their land to the company; and
- lazy, irresponsible and amoral youth who steal and sabotage production and stand against the interests of the community that GOPDC supports through community development schemes

In the ideological representation of contract farming, the outgrowers appear as a privileged stratum of middle peasants behind which lies a large reserve army of marginalised peasants waiting impatiently for their turn to become contract farmers. Daddieh (1994) reports that in the early days of the Kwae Project contract farmers found it difficult to hire labour because those whose land had been expropriated refused to work for them.

The main form of resistance available to the contract farmers is the diversion of fruits to the local market, to small oil palm factories within the communities and to traders and informal palm oil mill operators from outside. This diversion reflects the social conditions of production: that the expropriation of land and the binding of farmers to production contracts has not served the development of the local economy but largely the export-oriented trading and urban manufacturing sectors. Diversion of fruits takes two forms: diversion by farmers from their farms to the open market and the stealing of ripe fruit bunches from the GOPDC plantation by youths from the neighbouring towns that have had their lands expropriated.

Although the Kwae Project has created the potential for vastly improved yields of palm fruits, this does not aid the general development of the area. Outside the nucleus plantation, the main focus of GOPDC is on the lowland

areas that are most suitable for oil palm farming. The Kwae Project offers little to farmers outside of this microenvironment. The creation of a middle stratum of oil palm farmers may, however, create pressures on other farmers, such as increasing the cost of labour and the shortage of land. Paradoxically, while the Kwae Project was launched as a World Bank development project, the general development of the area is not in the interests of GOPDC because it may erode the basis of the company's monopoly and give farmers opportunities to further divert produce or switch lines of production. The divestiture of cocoa and other agricultural services has created an increasing vacuum that pushes farmers into the arms of GOPDC. Capital starvation in the 1990s and social differentiation has enabled GOPDC to gain further control over the land in the New Abirem area outside the contended nucleus plantation zone around Kwae, without the expropriations that characterised the early phase of operations in the 1970s.

Land and timber in the forestry sector

While the rise of agribusiness, with its associated expropriations of land and contracts, mirrors the era of structural adjustment, compulsory land acquisition in the forestry sector was largely achieved in the colonial period. Nevertheless, the implications of this expropriation of land only began to gain significance in many areas in the mid-1970s as new ideological frameworks for the land question began to redefine the relationship of rural communities to the state and international capital and open new terrains of conflict. This section explores perceptions of the land question and development in two settlements on the edge of forest reserves—Amantia and Apapam.

Lining up with history at Amantia

Amantia is situated within the Pra Anum Forest Reserve. It is a settlement of about 1,700 people (1990), and suffers from serious land shortages and abject poverty. Malnutrition is common among children here, who run around with distended *kwashiorkor* stomachs in the early morning to buy gari and sugar, their main meal until evening. The settlement is not self-sufficient in food and traders come from outside to sell cassava. In recounting how scarce land is at Amantia, the inhabitants often remark the case that they don't even have room to bury the dead. Their cemetery is situated in the forest reserve, and they need to get permits from the Forestry Department before they can bury their dead. Some of the womenfolk in the village have not farmed since 1983 because there is no land for them. Or take the case of Daniel Appiah: a road-building contractor who came to remove the topsoil of his half-acre plot of land and now he has been farming on the subsoil for many years with no

proper yield. All around Amantia lies the 48 square mile Pra Anum Forest Reserve.

At Amantia, farming is carried out on a microscale and a completely different picture of agriculture emerges from that at Kwae and Ntronang. In a survey of 92 farmers, of whom 55 per cent (51) were men and 45 per cent (41) women, the mean landholding was 1.5 acres. Seventy-five per cent of the farmers had farms of two acres or less. The largest farm was sixteen acres. The mean estimated area cultivated in the 1996 farming season was 0.6 acres. Seventy-five per cent of the sample were cultivating one acre or less and 46 per cent of the farmers cultivated areas of a quarter acre or less.

The main crops grown are plantain intercropped with cocoyam, and cassava, which is cultivated by 54 per cent of the farmers. Maize and cassava are cultivated by 28%, cocoa and food crops by 9 per cent and rice by 6 per cent of the farmers. Although land is scarce, farmers continue to bush fallow. The mean fallow is four years, 50 per cent of farmers use fallows of more than three years and 22 per cent use fallows of five years and more. The fallowing system is made possible by cultivating very small plots.

Cocoa farms are owned by 50 per cent of the farmers including 30 per cent of the women and 51 per cent of the men. But most cocoa farms are small and 70 per cent are under half an acre. Ninety-three per cent of the women with cocoa cultivate half an acre or less. Only 4 per cent of farmers have cocoa farms of more than two acres. The largest cocoa farm is 10 acres.

Capital expenditure on agriculture is very low. No farmers used fertiliser or pesticides or purchased seeds. Only 14 per cent of the farmers hired labour in weeding and most of them spend less than c8,000 on weeding. A large number of farmers hire themselves out as casual day labourers to farmers at Muronam to gain some income. Some of the women also collect pestles-woods, bamboo, cane and fuel wood for traders and carry them to the roadside for loading on lorries. A few men also engage in tapping raffia and oil palms in the forest reserve. The palm wine is sold in the mornings to the people of Amantia.

This low development of agriculture is the result of the appropriation of the surrounding land for the Pra Anum Forest Reserve, the first forest reserve to be created in the Gold Coast. This dates to 1908 and goes back beyond the attempts to introduce the Forest Bill to an era when the colonial authority was attempting to establish control over "waste land" as designated Crown lands (see Chapter 2).

In the early colonial period, the area in which the Pra and Anum rivers converge marked the boundaries between Ashanti and the Gold Coast. This

Figure 3.9 Pra Anum Forest Reserve

Figure 3.10 Distribution of landholdings at Amantia

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area was largely unsettled, but its ownership was disputed by the *amanhene* of Adanse and Akyem Bosome. According to historical records maintained by the people of Amantia,

somewhere in 1905, five years after the Yaa Asantewaa War, there arose a dispute between the two paramount chiefs, the *amanhene* of Adanse—Nana Kwabena Ofori—and Nana Kofi Ahenkora, the *amanhene* of Akim Bosome at a place called Nsese, on which these two *amanhene* laid claims.

The matter nearly resulted in a war between the two *amanhene*; and the matter was put in the hands of three ruling European officers—Capt. Fuller of Kumasi, Capt. Sorden from Obuasi, and Capt. Armitage from Cape Coast. A meeting was held at Brenase, a village in the Akim Bosome state and the two *amanhene* were invited. The three European officers were able to make peace between them. After the peaceful settlement, Nana Kwabena Ofori was given £75.0.0d and Nana Kofi Ahenkora was also given £50.0.0d for their travelling and transport expenses. The whole amount paid to the two *amanhene* on this settlement was £125.0.0d.

Nine years after the Yaa Asantewaa War, the Pra river was made a regional boundary between the then Gold Coast and Ashanti ... this area was put under the administration of the Assistant District Commissioner of Obuasi, leaving only constitutional matters which were managed by the *amanhene* of Akyem Abuakwa—Nana Ofori Atta—and Nana Kofi Ahenkora of Akim Bosome. The *amanhene* were told that these lands had become subject to the caretaking of the Colonial Government.¹

The *Pra Anum Forest Reserve Working Plan to the period 1st April 1959* (Quist-Arcton *et al.*, 1964) corroborates this. It states that as a result of a dispute over ownership between various factions, the land between the rivers Pra and Anum was to be “acquired” by the government and made into a forest reserve. As a result of this appropriation of land by the state, the communities around do not gain royalties for the considerable timber resources that are felled in the forest reserve.

Although the first forest reserve had been created, life went on as before. As *The History of the Pra Anum Forest Reserve* records,

In all these years after the settlement of the dispute and the creation of Pra as the regional boundary, the people had the chance of farming, hunting and collecting produce freely without any interference from any quarters. It is evident that some years after the settlement, a land was acquired by the government from the *odikro* of Amantia—Nana Owuro—to make the first Experimental Plot at a place known and called Kofi Dakwakrom on the north of Amantia, not knowing that a trap was set by the government to exercise ownership.

¹. This is taken from a sheet that was typed up by Opanin Ahenkora during a visit to Amantia, entitled *The History of Pra-Anum Forest Reserve*.

In 1925, a meeting was held by the conservator of forests with chiefs from the villages of Amantia, Banka, Muronam and Atokwae in the Pra Anum area about the changes that were coming about;

The District Commissioner opened the meeting by informing the assembled chiefs that from that date clearing of forest for farms in the Government Reserve must stop, unless permission was first given by the Forestry Department.

He read out and had interpreted the notice from the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti ... and also informed the assembled people of the severe measures that would be taken against anyone who disobeyed the notice.

With regard to the villages of Amantia and Muronam, which are situated within the reserve, the inhabitants of these would be allowed to clear more forest for new farms with the permission of an officer on the extent of forest that may be felled for this purpose.

The inhabitants of the villages complained that if they were not allowed to make new farms that they would starve. The Conservator assured them that he would not allow such a thing to occur; that they would be given ample land to grow all the food they needed and also to, if necessary, extend their cocoa farms.¹

During this period, there was not that much concern among the villages about the compulsory acquisition of their land, since people still farmed freely. It was felt that the land was being preserved for the benefit of their offspring.

In 1957, as a result of increasing demand by the villages for cocoa farming the forest department decided to de-reserve a part of the forest reserve which was to be released to the villages of Amantia, Muronam, Atokwae, Banka and Kotokuom. By de-reserving this area, the Forestry Department has effectively drawn boundaries around these settlements and prevented them from "encroaching" further into the forest. However, the lands allocated to the communities did not take into account the future needs for lands or the need to have a stock of fallow land that will provide the community with other needs while it is recovering. While the communities are supposed to be able to collect non-timber forest products freely from in the reserve, they are required to get permits for this from the Forestry Department. Permits for products that have commercial value or that can form a viable off-farm income have to be purchased, as in the case of oil and raffia palms used for tapping palm wine.

Although 500 acres of de-reserved land was allocated to Amantia, it is being released to the people in stages. In 1960, 130 acres of land was perma-

¹. Appendix 1(E) of *Pra Anum Forest Reserve Working Plan to the period 1st April 1959: Details of Acquisition Transaction*, Report signed by L.A. King Church, Conservator of Forests, 24.5.25.

nently released to the communities of Amantia, Muronam, and Banka. The portion released to Amantia was not shared equitably, for the chiefs and elders took the larger share of the land. After that, subsequent releases from 1975 onwards have been on a *taungya* basis. In 1975, 200 acres were released and the land was divided 2.5x2 chains (half an acre) for women and 5x2 chains (about an acre) for men. Progressively smaller allocations have also been made in 1985, 1993 and 1995: in 1995 a total of only 15 acres was released.

In releasing land as *taungya*, one aim of the Forestry Department has been to gain a source of cheap labour for developing the scattered plantations which form the nucleus of the Research Working Circle within the forest reserve. The release of land has led to a bitter struggle between the Forestry Department and the people of Amantia. While farmers are only supposed to plant food crops among trees on the *taungya* sites, in 1975 a large proportion of the farmers planted cocoa on their *taungya* plots. Failure to follow the procedures laid down by the Forestry Department has led to sanctions in the form of a reduction in the land released. In 1995, when only 15 acres (six hectares) of land was released, the Forestry Department made it known that it intended to release 110 hectares over a 13 year period, and that when this six hectares was successfully established with timber plantations a further five to 10 hectares (20–25 acres) would be released. Through promises of further releases of land, deliberately releases of inadequate areas of land, and using the threat of not releasing land to the community for not establishing the *taungya* sites according to the prescriptions, the Forestry Department is attempting to demoralise the people of Amantia and force them into submission. This has its brutish side, and the Forestry Department is able to play off village against village (Muronam against Amantia), in terms of rewards for good *taungya* practice and sanctions against “insubordination”. Through inadequate provision of land, the Forestry Department can also divide the community internally. In 1995, the people of Amantia refused to take up their *taungya* allocation on the grounds that if they tried to divide this land among members of the community it would lead to bitter disputes. In 1996, they eventually took up the *taungya* land—desperately in need of land they hoped that if they tended the trees according to the prescriptions of the Forestry Department more land would eventually be made available to them. In 1996 the community divided the land on the basis of 15 people to one acre. Those eligible for a plot were women, the chief and elders and bachelors.

The people of Amantia are contemptuous of the *taungya* system and assert that “what they need is land, not to be exploited as cheap labour”. They have also become highly critical of the post-colonial state: “The land was taken from us to make a Crown Land. We are no more in the Gold

Coast, so why should the forest reserve be retained as though it was a Crown land. We are now in Ghana so the forest reserve should be given back to us”.

Behind the rhetoric, they have two specific demands:

- that land should be given to them to alleviate their land hunger. There should be no strings attached to the provision of this land such as is represented by the *taungya* systems or by restrictions on what they can cultivate; and
- that they should be paid revenues from the timber royalties realised from the forest reserve.

The Forestry Department is adamant that they cannot release more land back to the community. This will set a precedent that will result in all forest-edge communities throughout the nation clamouring for the release of forest reserve land. The department feels that the solution to the marginalisation of forest-edge communities is to involve them in collaborative forest-based ventures that will raise incomes and off-farm livelihoods for the communities and protect the forests. However, given the fact that the serious land shortage at Amantia prevents the development of an agricultural economy that can even sustain the population, and that this land shortage exists in the midst of a large forest reserve, there is an element of injustice in this position. The land shortage of the community can be manipulated to force them into collaborating by labouring to realise the vision of the Forestry Department of sustainable forest management and timber production for export markets.

Opposition to the Forestry Department is also expressed by making illegal farms in the forest reserve and by collecting produce and hunting game in the forest reserve without permits. However, this is all on a small scale. Since forestry officers and forest guards reside at Amantia it is difficult for large-scale forest reserve sabotage to be undertaken.

Subversive voices in Apapam

Apapam is an important town in Akyem Abuakwa. In the 1984 population census it had 2,200 people and 299 houses. A large proportion of people who originate in Apapam have migrated to urban areas. Many of the youth have moved to Accra where they work in the informal sector as street vendors, selling such articles as secondhand clothes and herbal medicines. On important holidays and funerals they throng to Apapam and the town comes alive with an air of excitement.

In the past, Apapam covered a vast land area which extended all the way to Nsawam. As Nana Amoako narrated,

Our elders started selling out the land bit by bit to Akuapem and Krobo people and now there is no place for us to farm. In those days the chief would just sit here in Apapam, collect his money from the farmers who wished to buy land and direct

them: "Go and start by this river towards that river on so and so mountain and end there", and all the land was sold.

Apapam thus constitutes one of those towns that J.B. Danquah (1928:213) describes as "overwhelming instances" of towns that are "hard pressed for small lots of land" because "large tracts of good virgin forest lands have [been] sold away". The land problem brought on by the chiefs has been compounded by the status of the land behind Apapam as a forest reserve. This forest reserve was created to protect the headwaters of the river Birrim. There is little land left behind Apapam for further farm expansion and the people of Apapam have insufficient land for their farming needs. Unlike the situation at Amantia, the Forestry Department is not willing to release land on *taungya*, since the Atewa Forest Reserve consists of a rare type of upland moist evergreen forest. Plans exist to constitute the Atewa Forest Reserve as a biosphere protection park, a tribute to international environmentalism with tourist potential.

In contrast to these global sensibilities, many farming folk at Apapam think that the Forestry Department should release part of the forest reserve to the town so that they can expand their farming. They even debate how this land should be divided. Some people are of the opinion that an area should be mapped out, released to the community, and everyone should go in to clear what they can—so that those who already have sufficient land will not be given plots that they do not need, which will then only lie idle. Others are of the opinion that every individual should be allocated an equal fixed amount of land. The farmers argue that when forest land is released to them they will have an incentive to manage the reserve and protect it for the Forestry Department. However, with the present shortage of land many people are forced to enter the reserve and farm illegally or engage in illegal timber harvesting.

For a large proportion of the youth of Apapam, these arguments are irrelevant. Land shortage for them is not a problem since they have given up the farming way of life, which brings only drudgery and poverty. They are making their living from chainsaw timber-felling operations in the forest. They wish the forest reserve to be maintained as it is, since it is their source of livelihood. If the land is released to farmers, all the trees will be cleared to make way for planting and people will be claiming ownership of what is now a no man's land.

All around Apapam, in the houses, the bushes behind the settlement and in the forest reserve can be found stacks of sawn boards. There are many carpenters in Apapam with a larger than normal stack of wood piled up in their workshops. As one carpenter confided: "Any time I have money I buy some boards and keep them in my workshop. Any time a truck comes into town to buy boards, I sell some for at least a 20 per cent profit".

Most of the youth in the town make their living by carrying boards from where they are sawn to “loading parks”. Others are chainsaw operators. The chainsaw operators are paid ₵500 for every board they saw while the carriers get ₵3,500 for every board they carry to the loading park. As one youth exclaimed: “If I am able to carry 10 boards from the bush to the wayside, I will earn ₵35,000 on that day. Who would be willing to employ me for ₵35,000 a day?”

The “illegal” felling of timber provides large incomes for the youth, with which farming or any other occupation cannot compete. As a result of the lack of farming opportunities and the opening of avenues in the timber, trade many youths have become independent of their households:

Now the youth do not follow us to farm as we followed our fathers. Our fathers used to do everything for us because there was no way we could get on by ourselves. But now you can find a child of 14 or 15 years who can find sufficient money to feed himself or buy something to wear. And they will argue, why should they go to farm when it is no longer paying now that cocoa does not do well here? (Interview conducted by author in 1996.)

Some elderly farmers and hunters who set traps in the forest participate in the timber trade by showing chainsaw operators where particular trees are situated: “Buy me some drink and I will show you where there is a big *odum* tree”. For ₵500 they will take the chainsaw operator to the tree.

The “illegal” felling of timber is largely controlled from outside by wealthy and influential entrepreneurs. They purchase chainsaws, which are given out to intermediaries who organise the harvesting and movement of boards out of Apapam. Apapam-based intermediaries and organisers include both natives of Apapam and outsiders. Before 1992, the chief and elders were trying to protect the forest from the illegal chainsaw gangs. But in 1992, the stakes became too high as wealthy patrons moved into the business of producing timber boards. Rumour has it that the district chief executive has a chainsaw and some boys who are working for him. And ... well we better remain silent.

To successfully get their boards out of Apapam to the main market in Accra, the chainsaw operators need a high level of organisation and they need to develop linkages with the organs of state involved in the monitoring of timber. This prevents many people from developing their own autonomous operations and they become dependent on the networks of entrepreneurs that supply them with chainsaws. As one chainsaw operator commented: “My boards are ‘prepaid’ by the man whose machine I am using. He has to deal with the forestry people and the police. If not, he loses, because the boards will be taken from him”.

In June 1996, an independent operator who runs three chainsaws at Apapam and who organises the transportation of his boards, commented:

There is a young man called Peter with the task force at Koforidua using a BMW car who is the brain behind seizing the boards on the road. We pay to the task force ₦300,000 for every 200 boards. We also pay “tax” at the CEPS [Customs, Excise and Preventive Services] barrier. The police take their share. At times, the police even help us to escape the Forestry Department staff. My boards and trucks were seized this year and I had to pay out ₦400,000 before they were released to me. At times all seized boards are sold by the Forestry Department staff and the proceeds are shared among them.

In pursuing their livelihood informal timber operators have to deal with state organs, including the Forestry Department, the forestry task force, customs officials and the police who extract rents from them irrespective of whether they have the “correct” papers or not. Such experiences merely reinforce the image of the state as unjust and further encourage those working in the informal sector to flout all laws.

Head (tale) spinning—on the street at dusk

The *concerned citizen* can be found on the main street. The concerned citizen is deeply worried about the impact of all this felling on the forest reserve. According to him: “The illegal felling at Apapam is at its peak. Every tree is going down on the mountain”. Then he adds, dolefully: “And when I talk about all this the youth say I am jealous”. He continues: “Some people have even made their farms in the reserve. I know a farm in the reserve of about 27 acres”. And back again to the chainsaw operators, his lonely voice continues: “The boys do not buy the trees on the mountain or pay any compensation, since the trees are on no man’s lands.”

As his voice fades above the chatter on the streets and the rising of voices in *akpeteshie* spirit bars, we down another half-bottle of *menferewase* (“I’m not shy of my in-laws”) and other voices narrate:

Although the youth are cutting the trees it is better for us now. There used to be a lot of disease here but now most people are able to attend hospital and fewer people are dying. After all, if they are not cutting from my plot of land but the government plot and people are healthy because they eat well, what is the problem?

And as we go on to the next half-bottle of *makamaka* (“I have spoken, I have spoken”) a popular line begins to emerge among the farmers. They are welcoming the felling of the forest by the chainsaw operators and the destruction of the trees. They are convinced that when all the trees are felled, they will be able to claim back their land: “After all, when there are no trees there what will the Forestry Department have to defend?” As the chainsaws busily operate, whirring away behind the town, some farmers are already staking claims to bits of cleared forest.

The youth of Apapam are wild and tough. The Forestry Department and police are uneasy about or frightened of entering the town. The collusion of the state security forces and politicians in the illegal timber trade has also helped to make the forest reserve a no-go-area. A special task force may be set up to seize boards and chainsaws and give the youth a good beating. Maybe one or two of them can be shot with "stray bullets". But will this solve the unemployment, the lack of a future provided by the state and international bankers and investors? The youth can move on to any of the other numerous towns around the reserve, all characterised by a lack of opportunity for them, poverty on the streets and on the small degraded farms, and wealth in the timber boards standing on the alienated forest.

Cool reflections at dawn

Each of the settlements has a different tale to tell of troubled experiences of living in the 1990s. But as the voices weave in and out, other common wefts and warps emerge to reveal thematic patterns. The major theme is of communities struggling to make a livelihood as the state and international capital undermines their rights to land and their economic security in the name of development. These high-sounding, sombre, development objectives are defined from outside from the perspective of global market citadels. In the Kwae area, development is defined as the production of high yields of palm oil by international capital for international markets and transnational manufacturing companies operating in the nation's urban markets. Oil palm production has vastly increased at the national level but food has become scarce in the Kwae area and many people have lost their land and source of livelihood. At Amantia, development is the production of timber for the export trade from a well-managed forest reserve while the inhabitants fester in abject poverty, their land expropriated from them. At Apapam, the development agenda is about to be set by global environmentalism and tourist potential, while local people have insufficient land to provide a livelihood for their children.

The second dominant theme is the desire by agents of development to solicit the involvement of communities in their initiatives, to promote community participation as a means of gaining access to community land and control over household production. At Kwae and Ntronang, this is achieved by contract farmer schemes and at Amantia by the forest *taungya* scheme. These forms of community participation were all introduced in the mid-1970s. While popular participation appears to be democratic and driven by the highest liberal ideals and a sense of equity, in reality this concept of community participation in development has a dark and perturbing side. The community becomes divided and different social interests are pitted

against each other in the name of development—chiefs and elders against youth, men against women, participants against non-participants, middle farmers against the poor, good villages against bad villages—to facilitate the penetration and dominance of the community by capital.

Despite the rhetoric of equity and small-farmer participation, the main effect of the penetration of capital into agriculture is more likely the creation and strengthening of a middle stratum of farmers that will be tied to international capital and agribusiness by credits and contracts that enable it to engage in more intensive forms of production than is common among the capital-starved small peasantry. However, these levers of international agribusiness are dependent upon farmers' access to land. The interplay between the politics of land control at the local level and wider processes of capitalist penetration creates a complex mesh of relations.

At Kwae, the penetration of capital has involved the expropriation of farmers by the state and a growing land shortage. While land has not been expropriated by the state at Ntronang, processes of land scarcity, alienation of land through sale and the emergence of a sharecropping market have occurred, resulting from the commoditisation of agriculture and the emergence of large landholders who have been able to wrest family land away from lineage members. The dominance of sharecropping relations among migrant farmers at Ntronang reflects a situation where lineage land is increasingly seen as a commodity that can yield a rent-profit for the lineage elders, rather than as a resource for the use of all members of the lineage. As a result, the women and the youth of the lineage suffer from increasing lack of access to land, which is being converted into plantations under sharecroppers or under agribusiness and sharecroppers.

By carefully tuning its contracts to express sharecropping relations and a tripartite arrangement between itself, landholders and tenant sharecroppers, GOPDC has been able to take advantage of these land relations. In relation to international capital and the state, the structures of authority within the community have not protected the interests of community members. These linkages have become new avenues through which processes of social differentiation within communities have become intensified. Although the social divisions of elders, women and youth and the emergence of rich, middle and poor strata of the peasantry are not new and have been exploited by governments since the dawn of the colonial period, in the present period they are creating new social alignments in relation to the economic use of land that may break down the role of lineages in structuring and controlling land relations. A major social contradiction now emerging is that households and lineages cannot guarantee their members, including their womenfolk and youth, land on which to make a livelihood.

This failure of community structures to provide security of access to resources for its members is mirrored by the failure of the state to provide any sense of economic security for its citizens. In carrying out its agenda of promoting the penetration of international capital, the state has increasingly lost legitimacy. The expropriation of land for agribusiness, the wresting of timber resources away from the domestic timber industry for export-oriented production, and the selling of the mineral wealth of the land to foreign concessionaires create a burden on the peasantry. These developments have resulted in an arbitrary set of land policies that fail to respond to the needs of the domestic economy and the rural areas. This is most poignantly expressed in the cry of Amantia that "we are no longer in the Gold Coast".

In other areas, opposition is expressed by the impunity with which the youth have organised to sabotage global development initiatives and to make livelihoods by plundering the very natural resources and products that are transformed into commodities and fetish objects by global capitalism. The state has failed to provide any sense of future for the youth. But the youth have discovered, in the very resources the state has grabbed from the communities for the benefit of international capital, the key to a new source of wealth that is far greater than the incomes provided by farming. The youth have organised to take advantage of these resources, as in the informal timber sector, without any sense of guilt or operating outside the law. This is vehemently expressed in the phrase of the night harvesters at Kwae that "we have to eat too".

This organisation of informal networks of youth operating to gain a livelihood beyond the realm of legality is common in many sectors. Perhaps it is most developed in the informal mining sector. In the *Daily Graphic* of 30 July 1994 it was reported:

Twenty security personnel of the Ghana Consolidated Diamonds Limited (GCD) received bullet wounds when they were attacked by an armed group suspected to be illegal diamond miners last Wednesday at Nsukosua Mining Area, near Kakoase, popularly known as "Anoma Kwadwo"... A spokesman for GCD security told the *Ghana News Agency* that following a tip-off on Saturday July 23 that some people were prospecting for diamonds on a GCD concession at Nsukosua near Kakoase, a security gang was sent in to the area ... On Wednesday July 27, 52 security personnel and armed police went to the site and found more than 300 workers were prospecting for diamonds and that Mr. Dartey [the leader of the illegal miners] and his security were therefore arrested. It was then that, unknown to the security personnel, some of the illegal miners who were arrested opened fire on them. Even though one policemen fired a warning shot, the attack of the group was such that both the armed police and the security had to run for their lives.

While these mining gangs are portrayed in the national mass media as dangerous and criminal, it is interesting to note that given such large numbers,

they could have descended on the main diamond mining towns and engaged in a series of bank robberies or become highway robbers. Instead of this, they had organised to protect themselves when they extended their mining activities. In earlier times, small-scale miners could operate freely, but in the present, with the expansion of concessions, they have been pushed towards oblivion.

All these “illegal” activities within the informal rural sector appear as livelihood struggles in response to a more aggressive capitalism that is making inroads deep into the rural economy, establishing new frontiers for concessions, and curtailing the scope of off-farm rural livelihoods. As the state expropriates land in the interests of capital, creates concessions and redefines land relations, increasing numbers of people are losing their autonomy and independence in economic production. They are either pushed off the land, incorporated into contract schemes or find their activities increasingly redefined as illegal.

These livelihood issues are complicated by the increasing commercialisation of natural resources and the increasing penetration of commodity relations. Although the struggles of the youth are emerging in opposition to the state and its onslaught on rural rights, they also reflect increasing commodity values and get-rich-quick ideologies that can corrode youthful idealism and enmesh the youth in unseemly social networks. This is most prevalent at Apapam where the potential for illegal timber is resulting in an uneasy alliance involving the youth and corrupt businessmen and corrupt agents of the state. In the past, the informal timber sector could operate freely, but it was largely servicing local timber needs and operating on a modest scale. Today, chainsaw operators have been drawn into large urban-based trading networks and the stakes are much higher.

4. Epilogue on the land question

In recent years the land question has re-emerged as an important policy issue of concern to governments and the donors supporting and guiding their development plans. The land question has become important because it is perceived that clarification of tenure rules and security of rights is essential to promoting farm investment, improving productivity and encouraging international investment in the natural resource sector as a basis for export-oriented growth.

In the last 20 years, a new approach has emerged in agricultural and rural development in Africa that focuses on the "small farmer" or "resource-poor farmer". This approach argues that agricultural development needs to focus on smallholder development since this will have a greater impact on national agricultural productivity than will the development of large estates and lead to a more efficient use of land. The emphasis in agricultural-sector development should be on smallholder agriculture and "related rural development", rather than on agricultural technology. Related rural development includes the provision of transport infrastructure and support services, such as credit markets, which encourage the adoption of modern technology, new seeds and inputs.

This emphasis on the smallholder has led to the development of a new paradigm for development that challenges the tenets of modernisation theory. The modernisation paradigm sought to replace the institutions and cultural forms of peasant life with modern organisations and technology, and replace peasant farmers with "progressive farmers" and large capitalist estates. In contrast, the new paradigm seeks to accommodate and utilise local cultural forms and knowledge in development projects and invoke community participation as the basis for development initiatives. While the new paradigm has been dubbed "people-centred development", its outcomes neatly complement the global restructuring of agriculture in which agribusiness has emerged as a dominant form.

One dominant characteristic in the emergence of agribusiness has been the replacement of large independent farms, organised along wage labour lines, by dependent family farms under contract to large agrifood corporations to produce certain crops for the corporation. Under this arrangement, the agrifood corporation provides the "related rural development" features of markets, credits, inputs and seeds. Thus, much recent agricultural development theory attempts to provide an economic basis for this new alignment

rooted in the efficiency of combinations of small farms with larger units. They argue that small farms are efficient in that they are able to absorb the transaction costs of supervising and screening labour and because the marginal opportunity costs of family labour, including the free labour of women and children, are lower than hiring labour.

However, with the modernisation of agricultural technologies, small farms suffer problems when imperfect credit markets fail to provide them with loans to take advantage of technological developments; when there is a lack of insurance against crop loss; and when those technologies depend on economies of scale in order to meet the needs of farmers. Although rarely stated openly, this theoretical model provides ideological justification for the agribusiness model of small farmer and family farm production being organised around large agribusiness corporations that service the small farmer sector with credits, farm technology, processing and marketing technologies and which absorb the economies of scale.

As the new paradigm in agricultural modernisation becomes dominant, the land question becomes subject to reinterpretation, since its primary formulation in the postwar period was in the context of neoclassical agricultural modernisation. In addition to the contentions about the focus of agricultural development, a second area of conflict concerns the role of the state. In the original formulation of land reform in the postwar period, the state was to be responsible for initiating change through legislation, land titling and registration.

In the neoclassical paradigm of modernisation as applied to Africa, land reform was recommended to create an optimal allocation of land to the most efficient producers, rather than to be redistributed to the small-farmer sector. The aim of reform was to create security for individual landholdings and create conditions conducive to private investment in land. This was to be achieved through development of a state land cadastre, demarcation of land boundaries and registration of individual lands. Security of land tenure would create lower transaction costs in the purchase of land and in land litigation and release capital for investment in agriculture. However, this perspective has often been used by the state as an ideological justification for the appropriation of land for its clientele of agricultural entrepreneurs. The state agricultural sector has remained ideologically unconvinced of the efficiency of small agriculture and unable to transform its agricultural policy focus because of pressures from the coalition of large-scale farmers that have strong representation in government. Thus, the dominant class interests within the state remain committed to the earlier neoclassical modernisation paradigm of creating the conditions for the emergence of a private land market and expropriation of land from individuals.

In response to this position among African states, an important part of the new paradigm has been to show that traditional land tenure systems are adaptive and flexible and respond to change. As population increases, more intensive systems of agriculture will develop, and as land becomes scarce, a shift from collective to individual land rights will occur accompanied by a demand for new intensive technologies that will substitute for land, such as modern high-yielding varieties and fertilisers. This intensification of production will create increasing demand for credit for purchasing new technologies and the shift to private titles in land will enable credit to be supplied against land as collateral. In the transition period to the flowering of capitalist or modern agriculture, various institutions will develop to fill in the gaps. Thus, sharecropping is a response to the lack of capital for hiring land for tenants and for meeting the transaction and labour costs landlords. It is also a response to the absence of insurance markets for minimising risk. Although sharecropping may produce greater inequality in the distribution of landholdings, it allows for more egalitarian access to land for farming purposes. Eventually, African tenure systems, if left unimpeded by government, will evolve into systems of individual land rights based on the emergence of a land market that will respond to the needs of agriculture in an optimal way and the transference of land to the most efficient cultivator. In contrast, attempts by governments to create a land market may lead to unnecessary transaction costs and land tenure programmes that do not reflect the needs of farmers and of agriculture, and that may place lands under the ownership of inefficient farmers and land speculators. The role of government should be to regulate rather than initiate and control reform programmes. In consonance with the process of structural adjustment and the rolling back of the state, forms of devolving control of the land reform process to local communities and NGOs are being explored (Cornia, 1994).

The two conceptions of the land question are not mutually exclusive. Foreign investors still need land to be expropriated for the benefit of their companies, mining companies need farming communities to be expelled from their concessions and agribusiness companies often need nucleus plantations and farms from which to develop their linkages with outgrowers. The state is the most effective organ to carry out this process of expropriation and ensure security in the newly won land. Thus, some researchers are advocating the coexistence of dual systems of tenure: individual title for the corporate sector and community rights for the peasantry (Platteau, 1992).

Community, state and customary tenure

The opposition contained in the new paradigm between state and local communities—that is between the state and its “elite” and large-scale farmer, and local communities of smallholder farmer and “family” farms—is too simplistic. The premise underlying this perspective is the concept of “internal solidity” of peasant forms of production that protect their inner coherence in the struggle between the peasantry and state (Brenner, 1985; Watts, 1993, Scott, 1985; Guha, 1989). The history of land relations in Ghana and the nature of contemporary struggles suggests that an autonomous customary system of land tenure cannot be defined, but that the system of community land administration meshes with other systems of political and land administration.

Prior to colonial domination, many communities were integrated into centralised political systems with hierarchies of subordination and payments of tributes and taxes. With the development of export crop production in the early nineteenth century, land became rapidly commoditised and conflicts emerged between landholding chiefs and their subjects over the expropriation of virgin land for sale and, from the 1920s, for cocoa farm development with sharecropping migrant farmers. In some areas of Akyem, such as New Suhum, most land was rapidly alienated to migrant land purchasers and sharecrop farmers, leaving little land for the indigenous citizens. In addition to the alienation of land to migrant farmers, chiefs also allocated large areas as mining concessions to European investors, particularly in the gold rush of the early twentieth century.

As the colonial economy with its mining, timber and export crop sectors developed, the colonial administration sought to stabilise the economy by regulating the system of land administration. These objectives were not easily achieved and attempts to invest unutilised land in the Crown met with much opposition from the landholding chiefs and concession-negotiating intelligentsia. The eventual solution was based on the system of indirect rule, the cooption of chiefs into the system of colonial political administration and the codification of a tradition for which they became the custodians. However, this was a highly anachronistic tradition in which the concessions and land sales and sharecropping arrangements peculiar to export crop production became the economic bedrock of a timeless tradition. The chiefs became the main nodes of the concession system, ensuring a monopoly for colonial investors in rights to African minerals and later to timber resources.

In this context land administration evolved into a system with four components:

1. Lineage land under the authority of lineage heads (*abusuapanyin* and *asasewura*) in which members of the lineage could gain user rights in land. Apart from granting plots of the lineage land to members of the lineage, the lineage head could allocate land to migrant sharecropping tenants. The profits realised would be shared with other lineage elders for the development of the lineage. The allocation of land within the lineage was not based on equity. Land was preferentially allocated to wealthy members of the lineage who could make large profits from its use and bring wealth to the lineage. From this perspective, it made better economic sense to allocate land to hardworking migrant sharecropping tenants, who would realise profits for the lineage and its elders rather than allocating large areas to poor women and youth who could not realise much profit above their living requirements.
2. Virgin land under the authority of the chief of the settlement. This could be sold to migrant farmers or leased to migrant sharecropping farmers to release revenue for the stool. A portion of this revenue was to be sent to the paramount chief. Since land could not be sold to citizens, the narrow economic interests of chiefs was met by alienating large areas to migrant farmers and sharecropping tenants. This was most effectively achieved where agriculture was relatively underdeveloped until the arrival of migrant cocoa farmers, who then developed export crop production.
3. Concessions under the authority of the chiefs. While minerals and timber were being exploited by individual subjects in precolonial times, the invention of a maxim that the extraordinary wealth of the land belonged to the chief enabled the concession system to be created under the guise of tradition. Thus, tradition was invoked to monopolise the control of the mineral and timber sectors by expatriate capital for the export trade. It was in the interests of the chiefs to maintain this fiction since they gained concession rents and royalties. By alienating land for the creation of forest reserves, chiefs could also gain access to concession rent and royalties. If this land had been developed by indigenous citizens of the district, the chiefs would not have gained such valuable revenues.
4. Individual land that could be purchased by ambitious farmers from chiefs for their own personal development, free of the claims of lineage members and elders on the land. However, since these individuals often relied on the help of their lineage members and descendants to develop the land and allocated rights of inheritance to a multitude of descendants who had participated in developing the land rather than limiting inheritance to primogeniture, these lands often became lineage lands on the owner's death.

With the attainment of independence, the power of chiefs to grant concessions was checked and the mineral and timber wealth of chiefs was placed under the control of the state. The chiefs retained rights to concession rent and royalties. The state gained new powers of compulsory acquisition which enabled it to obtain land for development projects and international ventures in consultation with chiefs. Early anti-chief sentiments associated with the anti-colonial struggle gave way to an accommodation with chiefs in national political life and a growing role for them in administration through the inauguration of a house of chiefs. Many chiefs form part of the urban world, having been trained as lawyers, university lecturers and other professionals, or having developed their own businesses. Many rich businessmen have also schemed to be made chiefs. Today's chiefs are hardly part of an autonomous community solidarity, but may reside in Canada or Germany, appointing a caretaker to look after the stool.

Similarly, many lineage elders also form part of the urban world, returning infrequently to their villages at weekends and holidays to maintain the fiction of a timeless tradition which is constantly moulded to fit into their cosmopolitan global world. This concept of tradition is essentially shaped by reference to chiefly and courtly life. It is recreated from cultural strands that lie outside the confines of the peasant farmers who are attempting to live in a changing world and create their customs accordingly and who constantly adapt to the changing conditions of life around them rather than embrace the glorious traditions of negritude. In this design of African tradition as created by the ruling classes, the peasants are characterised by their illiteracy rather than by their role as heirs to a cultural tradition.

Commodification of lineage land and social stratification

Land relations within communities are not traditional; they have evolved to reflect the commodification of land under export crop production and extractive industry. They reflect the interests of the dominant landholding classes and their relations with international and national capital rather than the solidarity of the community. While this commodification of land is an old process that has characterised the development of export crop production from the nineteenth century, the growing shortage of land is creating new realignments in social relations. In the past, this process of land commodification and expropriation took place in new frontier areas of virgin land rather than on existing lineage land. The entrepreneurs in the cocoa industry were migrant farmers who acquired new lands in unsettled areas and then initiated a process of settlement and transport-infrastructure creation (Hill, 1963). As new land has become scarce and the frontier diminishes, the process of developing non-traditional export crops now takes place on lineage land,

and the lineage becomes an arena of conflict for redefining and reapportioning lineage land.

A new process of commodification is taking place on lineage land arising from the insertion of agricultural modernisation in the form of new seeds and inputs. This removes land from cycles of bush fallow cultivation and places it under plantations developed by those with capital or ties of dependency to agribusiness that gives them access to new technology. These linkages create new opportunities for agricultural investment within a narrow field of new, high yielding crops that are promoted by agricultural services and international agricultural development agencies. This occurs in the context of a contraction of land available to the majority of lineage members, which results from the expansion of these new systems of cultivation under the management of a class of aspiring middle-peasant "progressive farmers", and through the growth of agribusiness ventures on land that is often acquired with the assistance of the state through compulsory acquisition and expropriation.

Although this middle stratum of farmers frequently operates on lineage land, its modes of operation become determined by its linkages with agricultural services and agribusiness and its access to labour (casual wage labour and sharecropping) outside the lineage system. Forms of collective labour, exchange labour, and the labour of children on their parents' and parents' siblings' farms are declining, and agricultural production is increasingly dependent on the individual hiring of land. Male youth increasingly find a role as hired casual labour to raise capital to enter farming, or to find a substitute livelihood for agriculture, because they cannot get access to sufficient family land or capital for serious commercial farming. They take up sharecropping. Since their families cannot guarantee them a source of livelihood, their labour time is removed from the lineage. Sharecropping is increasingly becoming a relationship internalised within family structures, taking place between kin. Commodity relations are mediating social relations of kinship. Thus, the relations of production in society in general become internalised within the lineage and begin to redefine lineage relations through contestation over rights of access to land to participate in new forms of production. This conflict is most visible in the declining access of women and youth to land. Lineage land becomes increasingly rationalised and allocated to those who can make most profit from it rather than being equitably distributed according to the livelihood needs of lineage members.

The changes that are occurring in land relations within communities are complex. These changes are affecting the access of women and youth to land. However, to understand the dialectic of this process, it is necessary to place these changes in the context of social stratification: that is, the mechanisms by which land is transferred and controlled by particular groups of men who

have political influence—internally and externally bolstered—and access to credit and contracts with international capital. In this context, the declining access of women to land is a product of their relationship to different agricultural sectors, and the expansion of export-oriented and agribusiness sectors at the expense of food cropping (Davison, 1988). This expansion may result in redefining the process through which lineage land is allocated and conceptions of the lineage and family. This is forcing women and youth out of the mainstream agricultural sectors, in which they lack secure rights in land, into other sectors. Within their remaining spaces within agricultural production, this may be leading to a new solidity of female kinship in the form of a matrifocal unit (Smith, 1985) in which the generations of mother, sisters, their siblings and daughter's children are developing joint farming and other enterprises and maintaining female lands that are not allocated through the lineage but through participation in their own common enterprise (Bortei-Doku Ayeetey, 1996; Fayorsey, 1995).

These factors are not affecting all sectors of women in the same way, since the households of wealthy farmers with large plots of land contain women with a different sense of security from the women in the weary long-suffering households with insufficient land to meet the needs of their members. Similarly, some sectors of youth will succeed to large estates while others do not have any inheritance to look forward to. A new coalition of alternative livelihood strategies may be developing between groups of dispossessed women and youth outside formal economic structures and outside the structures of legality defined by the state. Such a coalition may exist in the New Abirem area between the young male night harvesters and the informal palm oil processing plants run by women, who also employ male youth and who depend on palm nuts diverted from the plantation.

More research is needed into the dynamics of the process of land allocation within lineages; the impact of commoditisation of farming and land scarcity on land distribution and the allocation of land to women and youth; and strategies devised by women and youth in response to growing insecurity of land access and its impact on family and lineage structures. However, this research must form part of an investigation of the general processes of social differentiation and their impact on the family and on poorer households, rather than converting processes of social differentiation into the "women and development" theme about how men manipulate rights and obligations rooted in local development agencies to gain control over women and wealth.

Export-oriented growth, international agriculture and the land question

Land relations within the community are evolving. However, this is not following the abstract theoretical model of new institutional economics. The pressures leading to transformation of land relations are not the systemic pressures of population growth and land scarcity that necessitate land intensification, and create demand from below for an infrastructure of technical and institutional innovation to cope with an endogenous path to agricultural intensification. Contemporary transformations are the product of a long history of commodification of agriculture stemming from the integration in the nineteenth century of the forest zone in Ghana into the world market as a producer of primary commodities.

The commodification of land and labour in the early twentieth century was not the product of land shortage or population growth, but of speculation in land against the profitability of export crop production. In the contemporary period, the pressures on the agricultural structure of peasant communities result from the development of a network of agricultural support services linked to international agricultural centres, international capital and agribusiness. These economic alignments are promoting a new series of crops and varieties of crops that have potentially high profits. But they do not address the needs of the domestic economy. They are geared towards export crop production or involve high levels of inputs that cannot be met by most farmers and make them dependent on the provision of credit for entry into agriculture. Without the development of a farm credit support network, contract relations with agribusiness become one of the major routes to new technology, and outgrower schemes become a major channel through which agricultural modernisation is achieved.

This is illustrated by the Kwae area in which a formerly diverse agricultural economy and environment has been replaced by a monocrop of oil palms under the control of GOPDC. While oil palm cultivation has been highly profitable for the company and some smallholders and outgrowers, many farmers are left out of these developments. The expansion of oil palm production and the expropriation of land for GOPDC has resulted in a scarcity of land for many farmers and for food production. Food is expensive in the district and has to be imported. Many rural dwellers are experiencing a decline in living standards and a lack of livelihood opportunities. The needs of the district have been sacrificed to meet the needs of GOPDC, the needs of the World Bank that has invested heavily in promoting agricultural modernisation, the needs of the agrifood industries for a source of vegetable oil, and the needs of the state for revenues from exports.

Throughout Africa, few states have developed the capacity to carry out endogenously defined agricultural research. They become dependent on the packages developed by international research. This results in research being disproportionately focused on export crops and crops that form the central core of the modern food complex, such as maize and rice. In Ghana, crops such as plantain, cassava, and cocoyam, which are the staple foods of the forest zone, and millet and sorghum, the staples of the savanna, enjoy little research priority, despite their dominant contribution to the agricultural GDP (Amanor *et al.*, 1993). Agricultural research does not respond to the needs of the domestic economy, but to the international economy. Increasingly in the contemporary policy environment of liberalisation, international agricultural research comes under the influence of agribusiness and responds to its needs.

Similar developments are mirrored in other natural resource sectors. In the timber sector, the rights of communities to timber resources have been subjugated to the export trade in timber. In the mining sector, expatriate firms are given increased rights to prospect and mine on land used by farmers (and even land under forest reserves). In both sectors, the needs of the domestic economy, that is the development of an economy that meets the needs and aspirations of the people in the districts, are being subordinated to developing the export of natural resources that are controlled by a few concession holders and provide export earnings and tax revenues for the state. In the timber sector, as the resource becomes increasingly scarce, a few companies are developing projects to encourage communities and individuals to plant timber on the basis of contractual relations with credit advances. Again, this will encourage the alienation of land from food production in favour of the narrow needs of the timber export industry.

With few avenues in agriculture and few recognised outlets in the formal economy, many youths are moving into informal sectors that are being criminalised by the state, such as chainsaw timber production and small-scale mining, and engaging in activities that involve pilfering, such as the night harvesting activities on the GOPDC palm plantation. These activities reflect a crisis of state legitimacy and the recognition among rural dwellers that state policies are not in their interests or administered on their behalf, and that formal state institutions will not guarantee their rights to use natural resources or to a livelihood. These activities also challenge notions within the new economic paradigm that linkages between civil society and the state and the corporate sector should lower the transaction costs of development. While the Kwae Project is able to lower transaction costs by inserting its operations into pre-existing forms of agricultural organisation, including family farms and sharecropping arrangements, the large amounts of palm

fruits lost to night harvesters and the large expenditure on security personnel to police the estate raises the transaction costs of development.

Similarly, the high transaction costs of policing timber resources is forcing the Forestry Department to effect reforms that give farmers an interest in policing timber resources. These actions are charged with a symbolic meaning that challenges the right of the state to monopolise natural resources for export-oriented development and challenges externally defined interests in development. They point to the failure of the state to define a national-oriented and people-centred development process that makes provision for popular livelihoods outside externally defined development. However, the major weakness in these actions is the failure of the people to organise around a programme that articulates their demands for the right to a livelihood and an economic environment that reflects popular aspirations and needs.

Towards a new perspective

At present, in mainstream development theory, the issues of popular rights and the role of civil society are being addressed on the basis of the polarity of the state and market in which people are being forced to adjust to the market. Concepts of people-centred development and community-oriented development essentially complement this approach. State power is being devolved to the local level, and local development is dependent upon communities being able to attract foreign investment by offering free or cheap community labour. Although these theories are expounded in terms of empowering local communities, it is unlikely that individual communities can act as a countervailing force to the state or to international corporations. Local communities are socially differentiated and this differentiation can easily be exploited by capital to secure its interests. The fact that recognition of the community and its representation is usually defined from outside makes it all the more vulnerable to external manipulation.

In Ghana, in a study of the Upper West Region, Songsore and Denkabe (1995) provide the beginnings of a critique of mainstream development theory by placing community development within a political economy framework. They draw inspiration from certain developments initiated by NGOs to alleviate poverty within a structural context and from the literature on people-oriented development. They view the problems of the Upper West Region as resulting from the nature of its integration into the world economy and of the nation state as a backward periphery for producing cheap labour and materials for external benefit. They define the main strategy to resolve the emergent problems as a people-oriented development strategy that focuses on building self-reliance and local use of resources to meet local needs,

and to enhance the integration of community, district, region and nation in a reciprocal relationship. Songsore and Denkabe argue that this programme cannot be undertaken by the state, since it has not been supportive of self-reliant development but has been fractious and vacillating and its power rests on a narrow social basis: "Lacking faith and in the ability and initiative of common people, [the state] has tended to rely on external capital and interests as a means of stimulating economic growth" (p.128). The aim of people-oriented development is to mobilise a broad spectrum of social forces around the contradiction between self-reliant national development and externally-defined dependent development.

Similarly, from an international food system perspective, Friedmann (1995) has argued that the opposition between the concept of state regulation and of market is a delusion. Agribusiness was essentially fostered in the highly state-regulated environment of capitalist agriculture of the last fifty years, which was a product of corporate pressure on the state. The development of agriculture along these lines was so successful that most people in the world became dependent on commercial agriculture, and rural land and labour became highly commoditized. However, many transnational food corporations that grew up and prospered within the framework of national regulation now experience this regulation as a constraint to further growth and lobby for the introduction of self-regulating markets throughout the world. Although this may enable corporate profits to grow for several decades more, it is likely to have serious human and ecological consequences. The effects of these policies have been to increasingly disembed land and labour from the social relations in which food is produced and consumed, resulting in growing unemployment, increasing impoverishment and social differentiation and mounting environmental degradation.

The reintroduction of state regulation is not the appropriate solution to these problems, although in many countries the farmers' lobby looks to state regulation to maintain its interests, since the state (as in the US) has fostered the development of global agribusiness and is acting to further the global interests of agribusiness. Friedmann (1995) argues that the appropriate alternative for issues of hunger, unemployment and sustainable land use that emanate from contemporary agribusiness, is democratic regulation of regional food economies based on the creation of a new coalition of wage workers in the agrifood industry, consumers and small farmers acting as a pressure group for the reform of and accountability in transnational agrifood corporations.

In the agricultural sector in Ghana, the state, in collaboration with international donors, created the environment for the development of transnational agribusiness during the 1970s and the expropriation of land to foster these developments. During the 1980s and 1990s, the conditions created

where these early joint state-international donor projects could be privatised and taken over by international corporate capital, as at GOPDC. In the timber sector, during the 1960s the state created the environment in which timber resources could be expropriated from pit-saw operators working in the domestic market to indigenous concessionaires operating for the export market. By the 1980s, liberalisation of the economy and injection of loans into the timber sector ensured that the timber industry would now be dominated by foreign capital and corporations and coalitions of local firms and foreign capital, and that these corporations would have more influence on the exploitation of timber than the Forestry Department. In both the agricultural and forestry sectors, the state has enabled development objectives and priorities to dominate that place the demands of international markets above the needs of rural people, resulting in increasing dislocation of livelihood options and inequitable access to rural land.

As McMichael (1996) argues, the alternative is to reverse

the tendency to make a fetish of the market as the key instrument of social organisation and subordinating the economy to community and ecological requirements. Once we address the issue of why we presently surrender our social and natural resources to market discipline, we can raise the issue of who benefits. If countries are indeed racing to the bottom by submitting to the logic of lower labour costs and stripping away social protections, where is this taking us and who stands to gain?

The alternative is to seek a new development process that places a priority on domestic economic needs and uses natural resources to provide security and livelihoods for the people, rather than for generating external linkages that perpetuate dependency.

Within the land question, two dominant positions exist in contemporary mainstream debates about the role of the state. The first position is that the state should be allowed to create the conditions of a land market that will promote agricultural development. The second is that a land market will naturally evolve in response to the evolution of agriculture and the needs of agricultural development and that the state should not intervene but merely regulate. However, as the above analysis has shown, the concept of an endogenous land market evolving in response to the needs of indigenous agriculture is an illusion: agriculture and land markets are dominated by processes of capital penetration and integration into the world market. Left to self-regulation, land markets will be moulded to reflect the dominant interests of international agricultural research and development, agribusiness and international capital.

The rationality of an approach that surrenders the utilisation of land to an abstract concept of market discipline; that denies a large number of people access to natural resources and a livelihood in order to generate

export earnings and foreign investment; and that condemns the bulk of rural people to use their creative energies to hustle for a living within a shabby informal sector that becomes criminalised by the state, needs to be questioned. This scenario can only generate a life of bitterness, broken idealism, lack of self-esteem and despair for a large part of the rural population. The alternative is to stop playing disingenuous intellectual games with an anachronistic concept of traditional land tenure and to define the land question by reference to the needs of contemporary people—the poor peasantry, women and the youth, who make up the majority of the rural population. A new development process needs to be initiated in which a broad spectrum of social forces within regions and districts are mobilised to use their creative potential to analyse the constraints to development within their regions and to develop a plan of self-reliant sustainable development based on the human resource potential and needs of regions and districts. Land reform should be formulated from the perspective of promoting the development of the domestic or regional economy to satisfy the livelihood needs of the population and their aspirations for progress.

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