

ORIGINAL WRITINGS *

By

Amilcar Cabral

The following two articles are the first English translations of early technical studies which Amilcar Cabral published while employed during the early 1950s as an agronomist in the Portuguese civil service in Guinea (Bissau). His principal function at this time was to direct a staff which carried out the first agricultural census in Portuguese Africa, published in 1956 in the Boletim Cultural da Guine (Vol. XI, No. 43, pp. 7-246). Before the publication of the census he wrote a series of articles in the same journal whose purpose was two-fold: to inform the Portuguese public and officials of the actual social and economic conditions in Guinea at the time and to psychologically prepare government officials to accept and publish the complete census with all of its ramifications. His approach is clearly discernible in both articles presented here. Some of the preliminary results of his census are contained in the article, "The Contribution of the Guinean Peoples to the Agricultural Production of Guinea." Cabral himself often acknowledged the overwhelming importance of the experience he gained while serving as director of the census. It enabled him to gain an infinite familiarity with the land and people of Guinea which he so effectively utilized later as secretary-general of the PAIGC, the party he founded the year the census was published.

The reader should bear in mind that although Cabral wrote these articles while still a Portuguese civil servant, he identified problems, located blame and recommended solutions which few, if any, Portuguese civil servants were either cognizant of or courageous enough to put in print. These two articles were originally published in the Boletim Cultural da Guine Portuguesa (Vol. IX, Nos. 34 and 36, respectively).

* These articles appeared in Ufahamu, Vol. 3, No. 3, Winter 1973.

I.

On the Utilization of Land in Africa*

Colonialism and the Itinerant System

The economic factors which constituted one of the causes of the era of discoveries in Europe led the European to settle in Africa. He has moved from merely a business of commodities, among them the Black Man, to the utilization of the land. But the objective of the European has not been like that of the African, that is, to produce what is indispensable for subsistence. He cultivates or makes the African cultivate products for export. He utilizes, or persuades the African to utilize, the itinerant system in obtaining those products. He modifies the method of production without modifying the land cultivation system.

Thus, new needs are created. Gradually there emerges private property (European or *assimilado*) which generates new economic relationships.

The itinerant system acquires new characteristics, prominent among them the initially latent structural obstacles. The lands taken from the forest become larger and larger and the duration of the cultivation period increases, while the fallow periods decrease. Even worse, the land is cultivated until it dries out. Meanwhile, erosion destroys the body of the soil and once abandoned, it will no longer be able to restore itself and laterization spreads.

In short, colonialism introduced a new production system in Africa, manifested in an *economie de traite* (exploitation), maintaining, however, the itinerant system of land cultivation. Colonialism has applied allegedly superior European agricultural techniques to the itinerant system without an understanding of the differences in environmental conditions. As a result of the contradictions created, the devastation of African land becomes increasingly apparent as do the difficulties prudently avoided by African agriculture. The example of Senegal gives rise to a neologism--*senegalization*--to express the devastation of African soil. The Black Man, impotent, assists or participates in his own destruction. With life unbalanced, the African becomes uprooted little by little, having not only to satisfy newly

* This is the English translation of the last two sections (only) of the original article by Cabral.

created needs, but also the exigencies of his new social condition, and he is forced to emigrate; he abandons or does not have time to assimilate the knowledge that he himself has acquired based on centuries of empirical knowledge of the environment.

Nevertheless, once settled in Africa, the European finds himself in an adverse environment, different from his own. He cannot leave behind the experience of the conquests, which he achieved in the struggle against nature in other surroundings. Little by little, he summons to his aid the conquests of science and technology. Even before that, however, he must fall back on the work of the African. That need provides the African with some possibilities to assimilate European culture and for defense against the environment. New plants are introduced which adapt to the African surroundings and enrich the agriculture. Slowly, local industry involving raw materials is initiated. The contact of men and culture (miscegenation), in short, the development of colonialism, poses new problems (not discussed here) where the conflicts are more accentuated.

The world is becoming smaller day by day. Life's material conditions foster new ideas. Man today realizes the miracle of the transformation of nature. He realizes that relations among men can also be transformed. That is, justice and brotherhood can break the handcuffs of prejudice and social convention. There must be no place for a subjective concept of race--no matter what its disguise. Life becomes real through the constant struggle to maintain it.

New perspectives are therefore open to the inevitable evolution of the factors which, nowadays, condition African agriculture.

Final Considerations

It is in the face of these circumstances and these perspectives that we must seek the meaning of the evolution of agriculture in Black Africa. What are the possible courses of that evolution? The answer to that question is not the objective of these notes. But, it is not presumptuous to state that such evolution must not, and cannot, ignore the following:

- * The need to make use of all the resources of Black Africa, which in some ways will require the progressive transformation of nature;
- * The need to apply the wealth produced by these resources to Black Africa itself;
- * The need to establish an agrarian structure which does not permit the disorderly and greedy exploitation of

the land; that does not permit the outright exploitation of man by man;

- * The need to offer the Black Man access to the necessary means for defense against the adversity of climate;
- * The need to encourage the cultural development of the African, which requires that he make the most of his own culture as well as that of other peoples;
- * The need to select and utilize everything useful in African systems of land cultivation, as well as all European techniques applicable to Black Africa.

The synthesis of these elements, supported by scientific knowledge of man and his environment (soil, climate, vegetation) will surely provide the direction for the evolution of agriculture in Black Africa. That evolution will have to take place in stages. It requires as a primary condition, however, that the fruit of the work of the African truly serve the African. Only under these circumstances (and with the present historical situation) will agriculture together with the other branches of production permit the progressive development of the African, in order to serve Humanity, working hand in hand with the other peoples of the world.

II.

The Contribution of the Guinean Peoples to the Agricultural Production of Guinea

Cultivated Area

One of the characteristics of Guinea is the large variety of "peoples" who inhabit it. The origins of the different African "peoples" who live here (and who are merging in spite of their isolation) are still being studied today in the field of ethnological history. Their diversity is glaring: from the color of skin to the type of dwelling and settlement; from language to religion or beliefs; from clothing to diet; from agricultural tools to marriage laws; from the division of labor to

the division of wealth, and from the economic infrastructure to the social superstructure.

This diversity, in which some influences are present in both the material and cultural aspects, is dominated by an identical sociopolitical condition and basis of life--that is, agriculture.

The "peoples" of Guinea are farmers. Guinea lives from that reality: from the labor of those individuals--secularly and socially anonymous, based on tradition and an empirical knowledge of their environment, using rudimentary tools--who cultivate the land and are therefore the essential element of the Guinean economy. Agriculture, the so often belittled agriculture of the African, is not only the basis of the Guinean economy; it is the economy of Guinea. Without it there is no food, no trade, no industry.

Thus, the activity of the African farmer is so important. Thus, it is vital to understand that activity in all its aspects, especially if one intends to support it, improve it, transform it so that this activity (considered in its human dimension) can reach in social terms the same level of importance it has in economic terms.

The agricultural census presently being concluded will provide knowledge of various quantitative and qualitative aspects of Guinean agriculture.

The actual contribution of each "people" to Guinea's agricultural production is one of the important aspects to study and understand. Important, obviously, because the "peoples" of Guinea are farmers and, theoretically, the economic strength of each "people" being as great as its performance, this strength (or value) is only well defined by the knowledge of what each "people" achieves in practice. Clearly, that knowledge gives rise to one more differentiation among the peoples of Guinea precisely in the area which, related to the sociopolitical condition, identifies them--that is, in agriculture.

The present work is the first stage of the study concerning the contribution of Guinea's peoples to agricultural production. To understand this contribution it is indispensable, at least, to study and compare the cultivated areas, analyze and interpret the activity of family agricultural enterprises, and compare (quantitatively and qualitatively) the agricultural production and yield of each "people."

In this work the total cultivated area and its distribution among the various "peoples" of Guinea are studied.

When, in an agricultural enterprise or in a region, multiple cropping is practiced, the true cultivated area is derived by means of the following equation:

$$\text{Cultivated area} = A_c - a_c$$

in which A_c is the sum of the areas occupied by crops, and a_c is the sum of the multiple cropped areas.

The measurement of the true cultivated area, in these terms, involves two problems: the determination of the areas occupied by crops and of the areas where multiple cropping is practiced. The importance of these problems was justly emphasized by the FAO guidelines for the World Census of Agriculture (1950).*

To obtain the figures presented here, the survey method by settlement was utilized, which is also in accord with the FAO guidelines described in this journal.**

More than thirty "peoples" inhabit Guinea, of which only eighteen are considered here. Actually, they are those which can be classified major "peoples" in the regions where they are found--that is, those whose agricultural activity is important in the agro-economy of the regions they inhabit. It is clear, however, that the economic importance of the majority of these "peoples" diminishes largely or becomes practically nil, when considered in relation to the Guinean economy as a whole. This fact results, at least in part, from the minute representation of these "peoples" in the entire population of Guinea.

* * *

Table 1 below shows the population, the number of districts or municipalities and administrative posts for each people in which agricultural activity is present.

TABLE 1

<u>Peoples</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Districts & Municipalities</u>	<u>Administrative posts</u>
Balote	4,373	1	2
Balanta	146,305	9	26
Balanta-mane	7,941	1	2

* Various publications of the FAO concerning the World Census of Agriculture (1950 to 1953).

** Boletim Cultural da Guine, No. 33. By the author.

TABLE 1
(continued)

<u>Peoples</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Districts & Municipalities</u>	<u>Administrative posts</u>
Banhum	267	1	1
Beafada	11,581	3	9
Bijago	10,332	3	1
Cassanga	420	1	1
Felupe	8,167	1	1
Fula	108,402	8	22
Mancanha	16,300	6	12
Mandinga	63,750	8	21
Manjaco	71,712	7	18
Mansoanca	6,050	1	1
Nalu	3,009	1	2
Pajadinca	1,001	1	1
Papel	36,341	3	8
Saracole	2,049	2	3
Sosso	1,605	1	1

These people are ranked in numerically descending order as follows:

Balanta	Balanta-mane
Fula	Mansoanca
Manjaco	Balote
Mandinga	Nalu
Papel	Saracole
Mancanha	Sosso
Beafada	Pajadinca
Bijago	Cassanga
Felupe	Banhum

The first four (Balanta, Fula, Manjaco, Mandinga) are the most widely distributed throughout Guinea.

Table 2 below shows the cultivated and multiple cropped areas by hectare for each "people."

TABLE 2

Peoples	Areas Occupied by Crops	Multiple Cropped Areas	True Cultivated Area Hectare	%
Totals	482,177	71,376	410,801	100.00
Baiote	1,903	-	1,903	0.46
Balanta	132,842	9,334	123,508	30.07
Balanta-mane	3,716	587	3,129	0.76
Banhum	116	12	104	0.03
Beafada	7,508	849	6,659	1.62
Bijago	1,842	33	1,809	0.44
Cassanga	624	171	453	0.11
Felupe	6,319	18	6,301	1.53
Fula	149,345	31,811	117,534	28.61
Mancanha	16,750	2,951	13,799	3.36
Mandinga	83,081	18,642	64,439	15.69
Manjaco	57,566	5,732	51,834	12.62
Mansoanca	4,220	693	3,527	0.86
Nalu	1,840	46	1,794	0.44
Pajadinca	981	1,167	814	0.20
Papel	12,127	226	11,901	2.89
Saracole	633	104	529	0.13
Sosso	764	-	764	0.18

In conclusion:

- a) The area of Guinea is 3,363,700 hectares of which only 12.21% are cultivated;
- b) In general, the larger (or smaller) areas occupied by crops correspond to the larger (or smaller) true cultivated areas. The Fula and Bijago "peoples" are in exception, undergoing a reciprocal change in their positions with those of the Balanta and Nalu, respectively;
- c) Analogous to the populational scale, the list below shows in descending order the various "peoples" according to their contribution to the total cultivated area:

1. Balanta	10. Balanta-mane
2. Fula	11. Baiote
3. Mandinga	12. Nalu
4. Manjaco	13. Bijago
5. Mancanha	14. Pajadinca
6. Papel	15. Sosso
7. Beafada	16. Saracole
8. Felupe	17. Cassanga
9. Mansoanca	18. Banhum

d) It can be seen that:

In this scale, the Balanta, Fula, Beafada, Balanta-mane, Sosso, Cassanga and Banhum (peoples) maintain the same relative position which they occupy in the populational scale.

The Mandinga, Mancanha, Felupe, Mansoanca, Baiote, Nalu and Pajadınca peoples occupy relatively higher positions in the scale of cultivated areas than in the populational scale.

The Manjaco, Papel, Bijago, and Saracole peoples occupy relatively lower positions in the scale of the relative cultivated areas than in the corresponding ones in the populational scale.

Therefore, it is not sufficient to consider the population factor, in order to infer the differences in the contribution to the total cultivated area. A "people" with a given population can cultivate an area larger (or smaller) than that cultivated by another with a larger (or smaller) population. This fact suggests the importance of the study of the characteristic family agricultural enterprises (agricultural techniques, cultivated area, productivity) for a complete knowledge of the economic value of each "people."

- e) The first four "peoples" (Balanta, Fula, Mandinga and Manjaco) contribute 86.99% (almost 9/10) of the total cultivated area. For that reason, and because these four peoples form the foundation of the Guinean population, with agricultural activity in almost all the districts and municipalities (see Table 1), their work is the mainspring of agricultural production and they are, therefore, the principal creators of wealth in Guinea.
- f) The Mancanha, Papel, Beafada and Felupe "peoples" contribute 9.40% of the total cultivated area, while the remaining "peoples" contribute 3.61%. These "peoples" represent a small percentage of the total population (each one less than 1% of the total population), with the exception of the Bijago and Balanta-mane "peoples."
- g) Based on these conclusions, the agricultural "peoples" of Guinea can thus be classified, according to their contribution to the total cultivated area:

Peoples with major contribution: Balanta, Fula, Mandinga, and Manjaco.

Peoples with secondary contribution: Mancanha, Papel, Beafada and Felupe.

Peoples with auxiliary contribution: The remainder.

This classification does not imply any superiority or inferiority of one or another group in relation to the others. It simply refers to their contribution to the total cultivated area, one of the essential elements in agricultural production of the Guinean economy.

Precisely because this differentiation is present in the economic field over the background of an identical sociopolitical situation and an extremely low standard of living, it transcends the ethnic and cultural diversity, and it will necessarily have a preponderant effect on the economic and, therefore, general evolution of Guinea.



Sunrise to Africa
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