

CHANGES IN SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND CULTURE - THE PROCESS OF DOWN-HILL MIGRATION IN TULA, BAUCHI STATE

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Introduction

The process of down-hill migration of the Tula people started during the 1920s and has not yet finished (FRICKE 1965, FRICKE ET AL. 1993)². The resulting present situation might give information how far terraces play any role in the economy, ecology and ideology of the Tula. Approaching this question from a socio-agricultural point of view some facts which indicate the pertaining or overcoming of traditional structures will be presented.

In the following the land tenure system, the adoption of innovations and the role of women in agriculture will be discussed comparatively for Tula Wange and Tula Baule on the plateau, Fantami, which is generated by down-hill dwellers of Tula Wange, with its more or less bad farming conditions on shallow sandy soils and Kaltin, where the down migrants of Tula Baule settle in a more fertile area. Tula Wange numbers around 2000 households, Baule 1000, Fantami about 200 and Kaltin 350 of which the sample survey includes 15% in the plateau sites and 25% in the plain settlements³.

Land law

A major characteristic of African societies is their spiritual relation to soil and the resulting land law. Soil is regarded as the connection between past and future, because land is inherited and should be preserved for the next generations (MEEK 1957, OLUWASANMI 1966).

In the time the Tula began to occupy the plateau they first settled clanwise. Within each settlement area there are sacred farms, which are used to bury elders also. These plots must not be sold. Today this original settlement pattern is modified through a cluster of public facilities and rectangular houses with iron roofs in the former British administrative centre (BRUNK 1994, 24). In this ward called „Change“ the farming activities decreased heavily and plots can be sold, even to strangers, to build houses on.

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² For the references see p. 172

³ Estimate of numbers of households based on BSADP (1984, 369ff.).

Especially the scarcity of terraced land forces people to keep their land in order to secure their basis for the staple food production. The right of inheritance during the increase in population leads to scarcity. Traditionally each man has the duty to share his infields equally among his wives, not regarding their age or number of children. This means that it is not common to sell farmland. To lease a farm, mostly for one year within the lineage, is, if done at all, only paid with a symbolic rent, e.g. a calabash of the harvested crops. In Kaltin, however, the traditional system breaks up in favour of money which creates an individual landright. Farmland can be sold without prior consultation of the family. In all cases lease of land demands a monetary rent. While the Plateau- and the Fantami people lease out their land to a larger extent because of a lack of work force, in Kaltin a lack of capital for farming investments is the decisive factor.

Adoption of innovations

The biggest disadvantage of the terraced farms is that cattle ploughs cannot be applied, which makes large scale farming impossible on the plateau. The number of cattle per household is accordingly low. One plough requires at least two heads of cattle. Regarding the average number of cattle per household, this means roughly that on the plateau only one fourth of the households own a plough, in Fantami every second household and in Kaltin nearly every household has its own plough. To own a plough is an additional source of income besides farming, because the plough can be rented out. Especially in Kaltin the high stock of cattle indicates the provision of working capital.

Considering innovations like gardening, two factors are responsible for the good adoption in Kaltin. The flat plains with a high table of groundwater near the River Awak offer the opportunity. Through the nearness to the Hausa market in Dogon Ruwa, garden products attracted the attention of the farmers in Kaltin and the prospering market integration of some households enables them to invest money in borehole irrigation systems.

Division of labour

FRICKE (1965) has already described the in- and outfield structure of the Tula Plateau in 1961. It has not changed so much until today. While men have to overcome long distances to reach their farms in the plains, women are responsible for the nearby small terraced farms. Here they practise an intensive cereal and root crop agriculture with a rotation interval of three to four years.

The crops mainly cultivated are guinea corn, millet, cowpea, groundnuts and cocoa yam. The rotation cycle begins with guinea corn together with cowpea followed by groundnuts in the next year. In the third year the cultivation of cocoa yam shows the exceptional quality of the system. The preparation of the farms starts long before the beginning of the rainy season. First of all grass is collected, bundled and put on the cocoa yam farms. Shortly before the first rains

the women remove the manure out of the goat houses, mix it with compost and carry it to the farms, where they blend it into the soil. With the beginning of the rainy season cocoa yam is planted and carefully covered with grass. This mulching protects the soil from erosion and provides a fairly cool and humid microclimate for cocoa yam. Additionally some maize is planted scattered in between and the edge of the terrace is stabilized with one line of early guinea corn. These demanding cereals profit from the high soil fertility and deliver reasonable high yields which can already mean the end of the hungry season. Some women plant early millet in the fourth year. In the long term this kind of intensive agriculture does not exhaust the soil but accumulating organic matter has the positive effect of providing soil fertility.

Opposite to this labour intensive agriculture the men used to cultivate the outfields in an extensive cereal-bush fallow system (FRICKE 1965). However, nowadays an increasing population density causes a severe decrease of fallow south of the plateau and even a continuous cultivation in the outfields of Tula Baule (FRICKE ET AL. 1993, 125ff.). The down-hill migrants do not open new land resources for farming but they build new compounds in their former bush farms. This is connected with giving out the terraced farmland to relatives staying in the place of origin and an intensification of farming activities on the farms of men.

A closer examination of the average tracking time to the farms shows, that the delimitation of in- and outfields becomes blurred in the plains. The big differences between men and women in Tula Wange and Baule almost disappear in Fantami and Kaltin.

Thus in the plains animal manure is carried to men's farms in some households, while on the plateau it is only used by women. This shows a significant change in the value system. The farms of women lose importance in favour of men's farms and by this women lose their autonomy, which is characteristic for the plateau.

In Fantami the extensive farming system demands a large farming area. Therefore few men cultivate slope plots with terraces in some distance of the settlement, which were originally associated with woman.

The loss of the traditional division of labour according to sex is even more evident in Kaltin. Fifty percent of the women either do not have their own farmland or even are not agriculturally active at all. This indicates that working capital, gained out of surplus production, enables the farmers to engage paid labourers, but there may also be a relation to the large number of Islamic household heads.

Denomination

In Kaltin more than half of the household heads are Moslems. Most probably this results from the closeness to the Hausa who settled in Dogon Ruwa during the 1960s and established a flourishing weekly market there (FRICKE ET AL.

1993, 127). Moslems are represented on the plateau by less than 25%. Sixty years of intensive missionary work in Tula Wange and Baule ensured a large majority of Christians.

Traditionalists rarely participate in the down-hill migration. A reason for this could be that they do not want to leave their places of worship. On the plateau they are still present with about 20%. However, in particular young people are attracted to "book religions", so the number of traditionalists is decreasing.

Conclusion

People inclined to down-settlement are characterized by their denomination and the adoption of innovations. They drop typical traditions which are still present on the plateau. Terrace farming persists in many cases as people have no choice to farm elsewhere. Attachment to land and community certainly still plays an important role, too. However, farmers invest in the education of their children in order to give them the chance to become successful in a non-agricultural occupation.

The extent of cultural change depends on the intensity of interethnic contacts, but also on the economic prosperity, which produces an innovative milieu. Prosperity, although influenced by the quality of the physical environment, has an important impact on the readiness to leave traditions behind. Economy, ecology and ideology are in a dynamic interaction.