CULTIVATION AND MARKETING OF FARM PRODUCTS IN THE HINTERLAND OF GOMBE

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Introduction

The study investigates elements influencing agricultural development in villages of the hinterland of Gombe, Gombe State, Nigeria. It aims to discover changes in socio-economic and socio-cultural interactions that exist among household, region, nation and world market. Of special interests are rural households as well as wholesale markets where dynamic processes in the structure of agricultural enterprises and the individual reasons of innovations are recognisable.

The final objective of the study is to analyse the agricultural sector in the investigated villages in time and space, by typifying rural households, there strategies of action in relation to different factors: for example, farmsize, cultivation techniques and marketing of agriculture products. The study is also interested in operational profits and costs of farms, income of households as well as expenditures, etc.

Because of the fact that statistical work is still going on, it is only possible to present a small portion of the results. Namely, the change in cultivation and marketing of farm products with special emphasis on cash crops during the last 30 years.

Investigation area

The study area is situated in the southern hinterland of Gombe, the capital of the newly created (1996) Gombe State in NE-Nigeria. Three villages situated in the Gombe Slope and Hills (see also BRUNK 1995, 52)[1] on both sites along the road that goes from Gombe to Numan were chosen as well as four big wholesale-markets for interviews using a set of structured questionnaires. In addition informal interviews were carried out.

This area, with its fertile "mixed farming soils" suitable for the cultivation of cotton was a potential productive area for the world market. Besides farmers of this area were already able to use oxen and plough since the end of the twenties. Thus such cash crops like cotton and in addition groundnuts were

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[1] References see p. 172

the dominant agricultural products till to the end of the civil war and the beginning of the oil boom in the early seventies.

The villages are Kombani, Tulmi and Gujuba belonging to Akko L.G.A., which is one of the most densely populated LGAs in Gombe State with 105 inhabitants/km² (Population Census 1991). Kombani is an old Fulani settlement where W. Fricke (FRICKE 1965) has already done field studies on agriculture in the early sixties. Kombani is of special interest for the present field study in regard of the possibility to compare directly data on settlement and agricultural areas, range of farmcrops etc..
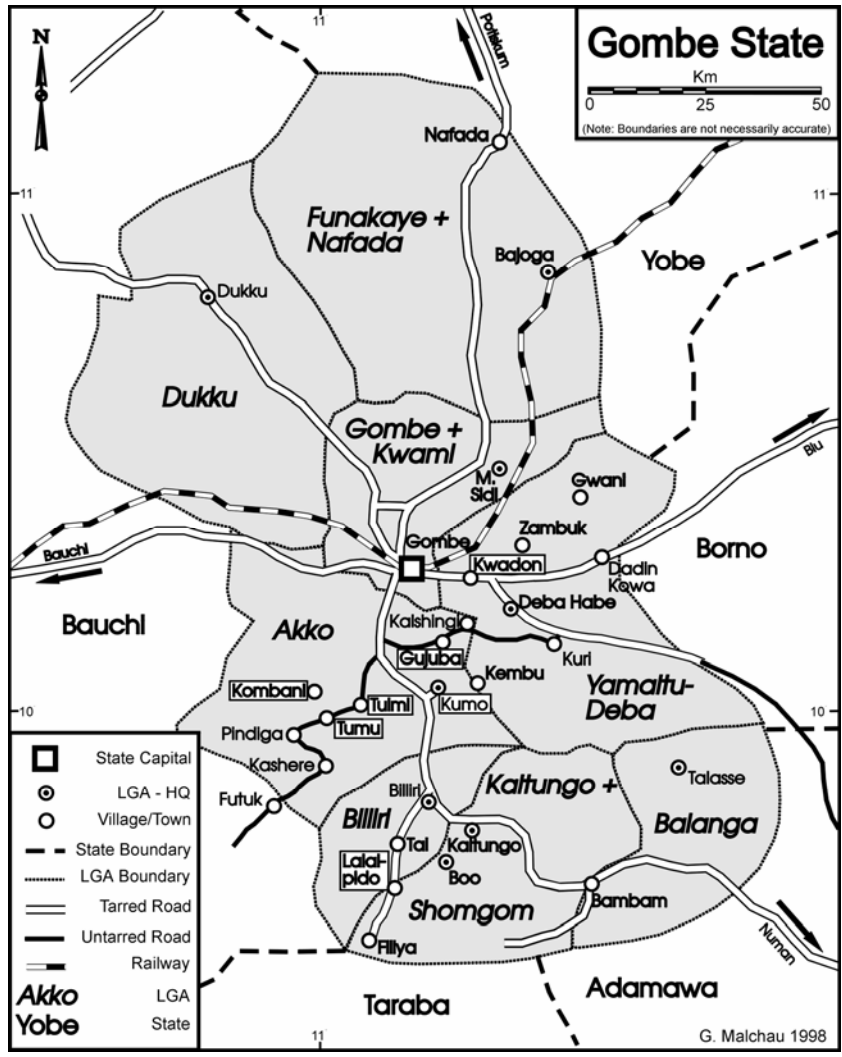

Fig. 1: Investigation area south of Gombe
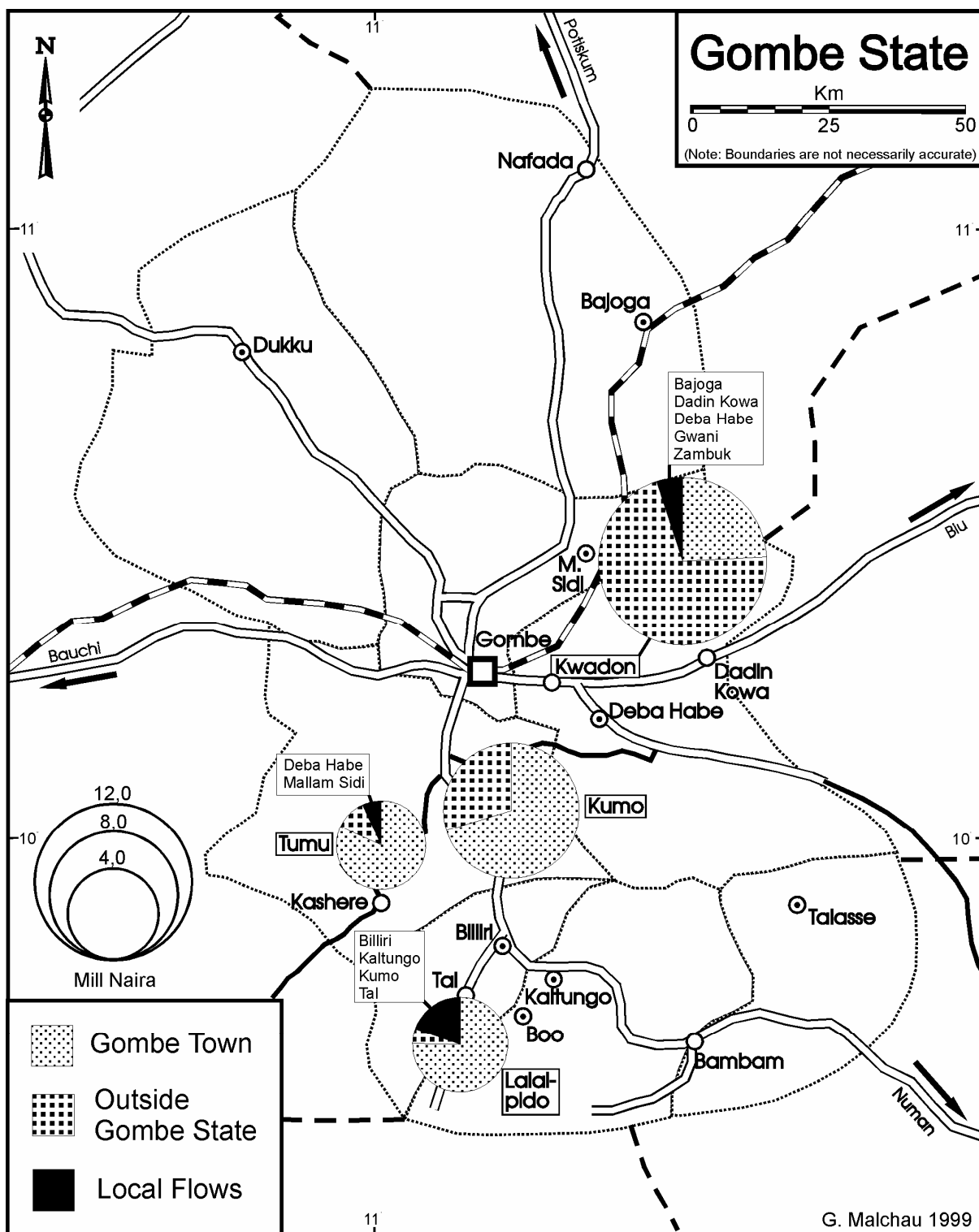Source: Fed. Surveys (1997), Stat. Div. of Budget & Planning (1996)

Fig. 2: Sales and destinations of selected agricultural products on wholesale markets in the investigation area (weekly averages from 1997 to April 1998). Source: Fieldwork 1996-98

The number of inhabitants today is calculated with 2,959 persons living in 483 households. The calculation is taken from a micro census (10% sample) carried out in all investigated villages. Tulmi as second village was founded by Fulani settlers too, at the beginning of the fifties but has a mixed ethnic population today. 3,898 persons are living in 606 households. Many of them

are former labourers originating from Gombe or Kano area but even from the Tchad. Later they were able to buy or to rent land from the Fulani founders and to settle with their families in Tulmi. The last village is Gujuba, an old Kanuri settlement that was founded around 1900 like Kombani. It is the smallest village with 2,133 persons living in 363 households.Apart from the villages the trade of agricultural products on periodic markets was investigated. At first there are the markets of Kombani, Tulmi and Gujuba, all of them are smaller markets where retailers were interviewed. Further on wholesale markets or markets with a big wholesale section like Tumu, Kumo, Lalaipido and Kwadon Mkt. were visited. For these markets the wholesale trade with beans, maize, millet and guinea corn was totally recorded.

Cultivation of agricultural products

As already mentioned the investigated villages are situated in an area covered by "mixed farming soils". With the introduction and spreading of cotton since the end of the twenties these fertile loamy soils were simultaneously and gradually cultivated by oxen and plough (FRICKE 1965, 247). At the beginning of Independence the largest portion of farmland in Akko L.G.A. was already affected by the new farming method, and at the same time more than 50 percent of the farmplots were used for the cultivation of cotton. In 1965-66 the farmers of Gombe Emirate sold 17,000 tons of cotton and 6,000 tons of groundnuts to the Marketing Board (TIFFEN1975, 27). The importance of cotton and groundnuts for Kombani, one of the investigated villages of the present study, is also shown in a landuse map of FRICKE (1965) surveyed in 1961. Initiated by the landuse map of Kombani, air photographs taken from the Nigerian government in 1964 and a set taken by the author in 1997 were compared with each other to find out if there was a change in the size and distribution of farmplots within the last 33 years. Although the compound area has extended over a bigger area today, the size of farmplots shows only a little or no change. New farmland necessary for a growing population was taken from bush land around Kombani which the investigation of A. Wolfbeiß has shown not only for a single village but for a greater area south of Gombe (FRICKE & WOLFBEISS1997).

Interviews carried out for the present study are showing landuse data in regard of each household especially variables as number of farmplots, cultivated farmcrops, ownership, use of fertiliser and/or manure etc.. A classification scheme traced out to calculate sizes of farmplots allows an evaluation of the acreage of agricultural enterprises in the villages after the final interpretation of aerial photographs taken in 1997. Together with average yields of farmproducts it will be possible to give an idea about the output capacity of each household. Apart from that, results available at the moment are presented in fig. 1. Concerning the cultivation of the most important farmcrops in Kombani, Tulmi and Gujuba 529 farmplots in 155 households were recorded. Because of multiple answers per farmplot (mixed cropping)

1,172 answers were given relating to the cultivated crops. It is not difficult to realise, that today the former world market cash crops cotton and groundnuts (around 10% of answers) are far away to play an important role again compared to the situation at the beginning of the sixties. The most important farm products are beans (33,28%), followed by maize (17,83%), millet (13,90%) and guinea corn (12,63%). At the time of investigation nearly every farmplot in Kombani and Tulmi was cultivated with beans, only Gujuba is an exception. Gujuba is specialised in vegetables like red and green pepper, onions and tomatoes instead of beans. The reason might be the relative short distance to Gombe Town Market (see theory of v. THÜNEN), although the transport linkage (transportation costs) for these sensible products through Kalshingi or Garko to Gombe Town Market is even worse compared to Kombani and Tulmi.

Another result is permanent cultivation in combination with a high percentage of monoculture (nearly 20%). With more than 50% beans are the dominant crop in the group of monoculture as well as they are dominating the combinations for mixed cropping. Millet and guinea corn as traditional food crops of the North and the investigation area are covering around 25 % of the answers.

Although the percentage of farmcrops contributed to farmplots, agricultural enterprises and at last villages offers not any information about the area covered by each farmcrop, an impression on changes in the cultivation structure is given. In the following the marketing structures of beans, maize, millet and guinea corn on wholesale markets within the study area has to be examined.

Marketing of agricultural products

To get information about the marketing structures of the most important farmcrops inside the study area like beans, maize, millet and guinea corn and about marketing flows to other regions of Nigeria weekly interviews were carried out on wholesale markets like Tumo, Kumo, Lalaipido and Kwadon. Wholesale buyers of the above mentioned products were asked about quantities, prices and destinations of their goods. In this way average sales per week in monetary units and units of weight were identified for each product and each market.

The marketing of the most important crops like beans, maize, millet and guinea corn can be distinguished into three different sectors (see fig. 2). There are local marketing flows, in the most cases goods are meant for destinations nearby, further on there are marketing flows for Gombe Town Market (retail market) and at last flows for other regions outside Gombe State. Fig. 2 is showing the weekly sales of the mentioned products on wholesale markets like Tumo, Kumo, Lalaipido and Kwadon. Smaller markets like Tumu and Lalaipido have large proportions for local trade and especially for Gombe Town Market. Bigger markets like Kumo and especially Kwadon Mkt. have

access to interregional markets on national level. For Kwadon Market for example 70% of the weekly sales are leaving Gombe State. The weekly average in units of weight comes to 186.5 tons of beans, maize, millet and guinea corn or calculated for one year to 10,000 tons of basic food stuffs intended for the interregional trade.

Fig. 3 shows only marketing flows of those products important for interregional trade. Guinea corn which is still interesting for the supply of Gombe can not be found on national level again. Also millet as traditional foodcrop of Northern Nigeria is only sold to Kano State and there mostly to markets in Kano Town. But maize and especially beans have a wide variety of destinations not only to markets in Northern Nigeria but also to the Middle Belt and to the South.

Conclusion

The results of the household and market studies are suggesting that small scale farmers in the study area were able to change their production of cash crops like cotton and groundnuts for the world market successfully to the expanded production of cash crops like millet and guinea corn for regional markets and beans and maize for interregional markets. Although the population density in rural areas like Akko L.G.A. has more than doubled in the past 35 years the study area can meet the growing demand of its own area, of Gombe Town with a fast growing population as newly created state capital and in addition even for markets on national level. It can be stated that the hinterland south of Gombe at the present is an important surplus area of basic foodstuffs for the Nigerian economy.
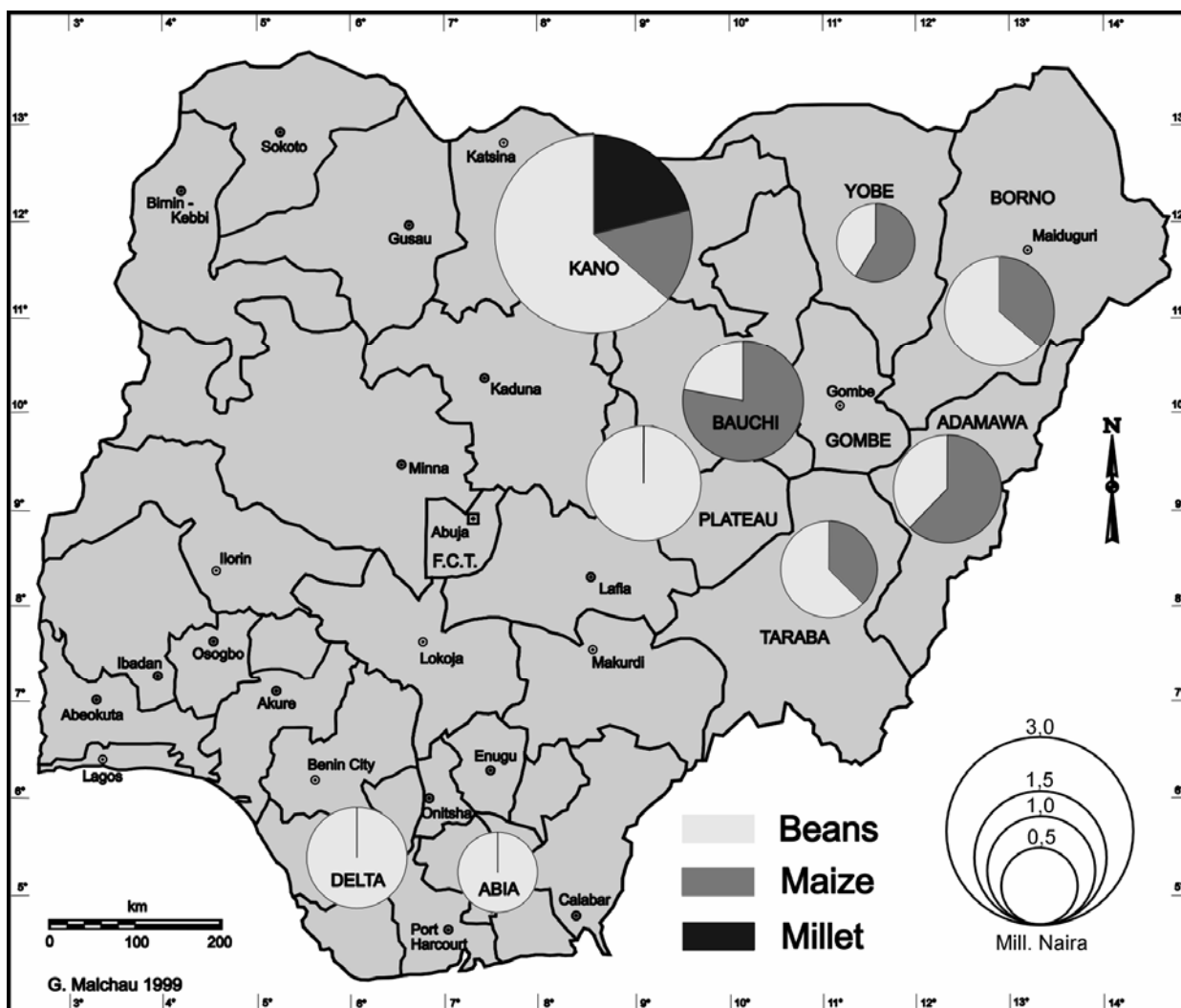
Fig. 3: Destination of sales for selected agricultural products from the investigation
area south of Gombe (weekly average in Naira between Nov. 97 and April
98) Source: Fed. Surveys (1997), Fieldwork 1996-98