Some Aspects of Migration and Mobility in Ghana

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The propensity of the species Homo Sapiens to move about, across seas, across deserts, over mountains, through dense jungles,—in short, to migrate—is a datum more or less taken for granted among students of mankind. The archaeological record of every continent testifies to its deeply ingrained nature and semipaternal character. Historical research, wherever we turn to it, and whatever branch of human social life and its material, or intellectual, or artistic products we look at, would be rendered jejune without assuming this. In ethnology and sociology, geography and economics, we have to make allowances for it all the time. Nomadic peoples offer striking examples. Spatial mobility is so built into their social and economic life that no sense can be made of their social organization or of their cultural outfit without consideration of this parameter.

Equally prominent in human history is another dimension of the propensity towards movement, that is to say, the movements through time of communities large and small that are documented by changes in their social organization or modes of life.

However, this general propensity of Homo Sapiens—a propensity shared with his hominid ancestors and with large sections of the animal kingdom—is a theme more fitting for the speculative philosopher than for a working anthropologist. As an anthropologist, I am much more interested in what can be learnt from taking a close look at the facts on the ground in a limited socio-geographic region. First, however, let me say a word or two about terminology. It is necessary, I suggest, for clarity of analysis to distinguish "migration" and "mobility," as separate dimensions of the general process of social movement in space and in time. I propose therefore to use "migration" for the movements of people—individually or in groups—across boundaries; and "mobility" for movement within boundaries. I speak of boundaries in this general and abstract sense; for I want the term to cover any kind of boundary recognised by the actor as a boundary—it may be geographical, or structural or ethnic or cultur-

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1 This paper is a revised version of a lecture originally delivered in November 1967 at a Conference on Migration and Mobility at the University of Florida, Gainsville, Fl., under the joint auspices of the Center for Latin American Studies and the African Studies Program.
al. Thus the total fact of movement we encounter in a particular case can be made up of both a migration element and a mobility component. Analytically speaking we have to consider both variables in any attempt to depict what is happening.

It is obvious, of course, that I am simply generalizing what is a well established practice in the conceptual and statistical procedures of the specialists who have accumulated the vast array of studies on these topics in every country of the world in the past 60 or 70 years. In my paradigmatic case, that of an African from a tribal area migrating to an urban centre, he crosses a series of boundaries, it might even be an international political boundary. He crosses socio-geographical, structural, politico-jural, economic, and cultural boundaries. But once in the new environment, he is faced with a challenge of mobility, first, possibilities of economic mobility in occupation and earning capacity; then, of cultural mobility in his style of living, as well as in his skills, his modes of thought, his aspirations, and so on, during his own life time; lastly possibilities of laying the foundations for the so-called vertical mobility of his children, mobility which from the observer’s angle is movement through time. For what does time signify in the context of human social existence, but the dialectical process of continuity and growth within a generation followed by the replacement of each generation by the next successor generation?

Migration and mobility are aspects of a multidimensional phenomenon in regard to which many analytical questions arise. We are concerned with aspects of the movements of persons in and through social systems; and fully to comprehend such movements we should have to range much more widely than I am able to here. This point is well illustrated if we consider the limitations of bare statistics. The following example from Great Britain, for which I am indebted to Professor Donald MacRae, is illuminating. In the decade 1951–61, Scotland lost—or, if you prefer, exported—about 24,000 people a year to England. In one sense this is a case of geographical mobility; for it represents a population movement within the political society of which Scots as well as English are equal citizens with freedom to live wherever they wish to. However, for the Scotsmen it was also an emigration across a cultural and economic boundary within the total social system. For certain areas in England, such boom towns as Luton, for instance, which received substantial numbers of these Scottish emigrants, it was an immigration, an accretion of a socio-cultural group which had to be physically, socially, and culturally accommodated and in due time integrated. However, if we want to understand the slope of this gradient, so to speak, why 24,000 people left Scotland for England every year and only about 3,000 moved in the reverse direction, we must consider what sort of people they were in social and cultural terms. Those who moved to places like Luton, where the automobile and other new industries were producing the boom, were skilled workers and their families. Elsewhere, the immigrants were professional men and women, mainly doctors (who were then being over-produced in Scotland) and other academically trained cadres.

It is an easily justified guess that, in the case of the skilled workers, the
factor of migration was more conspicuous in the way they perceived their
movement than the factor of mobility, whereas for a doctor or academic it was
only a small part of the story; and occupational and class data another part;
there are complex questions of motivation, as well as the more obvious questions
of the structural shifts and the economic constraints represented in these move-
ments, to be reckoned with.

The point I am making is graphically apparent if we look at a country like
Ghana. According to the 1960 Census of Ghana¹ (Special Report E) there are
92 so-called “tribes” in a population of about 7½ million. The term “tribe”,
needless to say, is not, in the Census, used in an anthropologically strict con-
notation but quite empirically to identify ethnic groups or local communities
that distinguish themselves from others by criteria of provenance, language,
culture, and social structure. This is sufficient to remind us that Ghana, taken
as a whole, is now socially and culturally heterogeneous to a notable degree.
On one level, this heterogeneity is inherent in the traditional geographical
distribution of the culturally diverse peoples of Ghana², and goes back in time
as far as human memory records. But the aspect of interest in the present con-
nection is the degree to which this heterogeneity is the product of migration and
mobility in recent times³.

On a rough estimate, something of the order of a half to three-quarter
million of the people living and working in Ghana in 1960 were Africans from
other African states—Nigeria, Dahomey, Haute Volta, etc. But these crude
figures tell us little. We learn more when we find that they include about
100,000 Yoruba from Nigeria, most of whom were engaged in commerce and
trade; that there were 130,000 Mossi immigrants from the Haute Volta, the
majority of whom are recorded as farm workers or general labourers or do-
meric servants; that there were 5,000 or so immigrants from Gao consisting
almost entirely of males and that they all worked as unskilled labourers, almost
entirely indeed as unskilled “carriers”. Here we meet with indications of the
cross-national, cross-cultural migration that has produced the present ethnic
patchwork in Ghana.

Among such vital information necessary for a proper study of our problem
that is lacking in the Census data, one item stands out. We cannot tell from the
Census how long these foreign immigrants—let us call them exo-migrants for
short—have been living in Ghana, at the time of the Census. This kind of
question can be answered only by fieldwork not by census enumeration. A
few indications are available from research that is now in train in Ghana. What
emerges is that exo-migration has a very varied temporal range. There are

¹ I draw here on an unpublished analysis of the Census data by Dr. Polly Hill Humphreys,
for access to which I am greatly indebted to her.
² A useful outline of this distribution is given in Bourrett, F. M., 1960. Ghana—the Road to
³ A fundamental contribution to the demographic and sociological analysis of migration
and mobility in Ghana is A Study of Contemporary Ghana, Vol. 2: Some Aspects of Social
Structure, edited by Walter Birmingham, I. Neustadt and E. N. Omaboe. Allen and
Mossi, Yoruba and Hausa groups who have lived in Ghana continuously for half a century or longer; but at the other extreme there are temporaries who come only for a season to work on farms or in one of the extractive industries or to trade, and then go back home—to marry with the bride-price they have earned and to cultivate their fields. There are also many in these exo-migrant communities who have been born and brought up and educated in Ghana and who are now, by the process of intergenerational mobility, moving into new occupations and professions different from those of their parents and into corresponding shifts in their life-style.

But to get a more complete anthropological picture of migration and of spatial and temporal mobility in Ghana, we must look at the composition of the population of towns, villages, and other local communities. Unfortunately we still lack the social and historical data needed to discuss this in a systematic way. What we do know, from the sources at present available, is that all the bigger towns have very mixed populations; and that these include a large number of what I shall call endo-migrants—comparable to the Scots who migrate to England,—as well as numerous exo-migrant groups from other West African countries. And this is true nowadays not only of the major urban areas (such as Kumasi and Accra) or the industrial (e.g. mining) areas, but also of the increasing number of small urban agglomerations growing up at main crossroads, centres of administration, in the vicinity of schools and hospitals, etc.

The development of motor roads in particular has contributed to fostering and facilitating mobility and migration internally in Ghana to an extent that was undreamt of when I first went there 33 years ago.

In 1934, when I was living at Tongo among the Tallensi, if I had run short of sugar, or matches, or kerosene—to say nothing of whiskey or flour or tinned meats—I might have obtained a small supply from a local store in Navrongo, 30 miles away; but the chances are that I would have had to send 100 miles to Tamale for these supplies. In the dry season the round trip would have meant a journey of at least two days by a dusty and uncomfortable dirt road. Today, a metalled, all-weather road enables one to drive to Tamale in a couple of hours and one can do the round trip in a morning. During the thirties, rainy-season travel was even more arduous, for one had to cross two fast flowing rivers by ferry or by dugout canoe. Today concrete bridges carry the road over these rivers.

The expansion and improvement of communications by road are symbolical of the fundamental restructuring of the social space and cultural environment of the peoples of Ghana that has taken place in the span of time since I first

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went there—a span equivalent to at most two demographic generations. By 1963, an urban centre had grown up at Bolgatanga, within 10 miles of Tongo. A modern hospital, schools, several well-stocked stores, an imposing Catholic church, a bank, a post office, a police station and jail, a large transport yard packed day and night with passenger lorries and goods trucks en route to the coast towns some 500 miles south or to centres of trade as far north as the Niger, and a typical open-air market, had grown up around what used to be a traditional, local market centre. An expanding suburban development was providing housing for the very considerable population of white-collar, salaried, educated clerks, teachers, clergy, government officials and traders mostly from Southern Ghana. And of course the usual excrescences on urbanisation were amply evident—beer shops with juke boxes, hawkers, prostitutes, thieves and scroungers, as well as a regiment of beggars and vagrants. It is today a cosmopolitan community, in which almost everyone of the 92 ethnic groups, native and foreign, enumerated in the census, is represented. It replicates on a small scale what can be observed of the socio-economic structure and the cultural heterogeneity of the larger urban areas of Ghana. Migration and mobility here bring together in a single territorial aggregation persons and groups of diverse national, regional, ethnic, social and cultural origins, of varied occupational skills and vocations, of different religious faiths and practises; an aggregation stratified by status, by income levels, by prestige rating, and by style of life.

The question that immediately arises is: what sort of community does such an agglomeration constitute? What sort of common interests bind them together? And when we try to answer this question we come up at once against the time dimension.

Heterogeneous urban aggregations have long existed in Ghana. There was a sizeable foreign settlement in Kumasi in the early years of the last century. It included Moslems from the bend of the Niger and even further north. Trade was the main incentive that brought them there, and though many were transients, there can be little doubt that many were more or less permanent residents there. It is difficult to determine how much these foreign sojourners influenced Ashanti material and social culture. Thus, though Islam is a proselytising religion, there is no evidence of Ashanti being converted by these foreigners on any appreciable scale before the colonial period. One reason is that they never ceased to be regarded as foreigners. Neither collectively not in-

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The economic, political and cultural effects of the establishment and rapid growth of this urban centre in what was until recently and still is largely a tribal subsistence area, are described in a forthcoming study by Dr. J. Keith Hart on entrepreneurship and migration in Northern Ghana.

2 As is described in the famous book by T. E. Bowdich, 1819, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*. 
dividually were they admitted to citizenship in the Ashanti state. This was not due to xenophobia, which we can assert with certainty never existed and does not exist now in Ghana. It was due to the impossibility of assimilating a free foreigner into the Ashanti clan structure, which was an indispensable prerequisite for citizenship. Residence alone, however long, could not serve as a credential for this. On the other hand, it is also pretty certain that the foreigners did not desire to accept Ashanti citizenship, which would have meant finally severing their bonds with their natal societies, cultures and religious communities. It was not a handicap or a disgrace to be a foreigner, living in a foreign quarter, and carrying on business relations with the Ashanti from there.

The significance of this is obvious. The kind of community developed in a heterogeneous population aggregate depends in a fundamental respect on the political system—and,  

ergo, on the legal system—that applies in it. Modern urban aggregations are, of course, enormously larger and more complex than was Kumasi in 1818; and the problems of citizenship that correspond to the socio-economic and juridical institutions of contemporary Ghana are much more involved. It would take a special paper to deal with these problems in any detail. Suffice it to note that citizenship, nowadays, is in effect a whole cluster of politico-jural statuses. There is the element of citizenship, or rather civil status, under the local and regional administration, citizenship in natal tribe communities, and citizenship in the national state; and each of these grades of citizenship carries its specific rights and obligations, privileges and immunities. The pertinent fact here is that geographical movement, whether by endo-migration or by exo-migration, does not create new or extinguish natal citizenship. A Tallensi living in Accra does not stop being tribally a Tallensi either in terms of familial and other obligations due from him to his home community, or in terms of rights he has in it. Thus in 1963 I found that two recently installed Custodians of the Earth Shrines had lived and worked in Southern Ghana for thirty and forty years respectively but had returned to take up these offices that fell to them by right of seniority in the lineage. The same rule applies to all immigrants in any region of Ghana. Yoruba, Hausa, Mossi and so on, remain citizens of their countries of origin.

The implications of this are far-reaching. For not only do non-natives of a

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1 I am oversimplifying what was probably a more complex relationship between these foreign residents and their host community (see Wilks, Ivor, 1961, *The Northern Factor in Ashanti*) but the essential point is that there was no free movement of individuals from one community into the other. The barriers of culture and social organization were fixed and accepted as such. Citizenship in the Ashanti state could be acquired only by birth into an Ashanti matrilineal clan or by adoption into such a clan of a person who was an alien. (Cf. Rattray, R. S., 1929, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* passim)

2 See Fortes, 1945, p. 20 and *passim* for a description of these functionaries.

3 Since this was written unhappy evidence that this principle is taken for granted by the host country no less than by immigrants, has appeared in the action of the government of Ghana, in November 1969, of virtually expelling foreign Africans without legal residence permits. The order, significantly enough, applies also to people born in Ghana of foreign parentage. (See the well informed weekly journal *West Africa*, published in London, in particular the issue of December 20th, 1969, for the details and for comment.)
town, a village, or a region, remain legally citizens of their countries and tribes of origin—they tend to remain also culturally and socially attached to their own natal communities. In geographical and economic respects they are migrants; culturally, and more ambiguously, in their social and political orientation, they are potentially—but only potentially—mobile.

The repercussions of this latent disparity need much more investigation than has yet been devoted to them. The gross manifestations are as patent today as they were in 1945, when I first studied them in Kumasi, though inter-ethnic social relations are much more free. They appear in the occupational and residential ecology of the towns. It has long been customary (certainly since the beginning of the colonial period) for the immigrant residents in a town or village anywhere in Southern Ghana to have their own quarter, usually known by the Hausa term as the Zongo. In Accra and Kumasi today immigrants from Northern Ghana still tend to congregate heavily in certain of the poorer residential areas and not in others. Mossi, Hausa and Yoruba tend likewise to cluster in their own residential areas in the towns. This facilitates the trading and other specialised (illegal as well as legal) economic activities of immigrant groups. It facilitates the mutual hospitality and commensality, the marriages, and the mutual and communal assistance in times of crisis such as sickness or death, that serve particularly to bind an immigrant community together. It facilitates the formation of associations and the emergence of leadership and of some form of political organization in each group. Most of all, it facilitates the preservation, and the transmission to the next generation, of critical cultural possessions, those felt to be distinctive of each group, primarily their language and their family system, but also their distinctive religious practices, especially if they are Moslem.

Two consequences are obvious. Ethnically and culturally diverse groups do not fuse merely by virtue of juxtaposition in a local community and participation in the common economy and in the use of common instrumental amenities and provisions (such as schools and hospitals). This holds even where there is residential intermingling. The Ghanaian urban aggregate tends to be a "plural society" in the sense given to this concept by J. S. Furnivall. Its main focus of common interest is economic, and in the realm of economics competition is far more in evidence than is cooperation. As far as political, social and cultural interests are concerned, the tendency is towards divergence. It was my impression in 1963 that there was on the surface, in many places, a great show of political consensus in allegiance to the CPP, adulation of the then President, and a response to the political and social propaganda of press and radio. But it seemed doubtful to me if this movement was drawing any of the foreign groups into its scope; and it was not extinguishing primary tribal loyalties among Ghanaians either. There are caste-like features in the social and po-

1 See, in particular, his classic analysis of the plural society as a product of colonial rule in his book Colonial Policy and Practice, 1947. Cambridge University Press.
2 As Dennis Austin demonstrates in his definitive study Politics in Ghana, 1946–1960, 1964, Oxford University Press, Ch. VIII.
litical relations of the different ethnic groups in modern Ghana. But the cleav-
ages are primarily cultural and linguistic, for none of the classical inter-caste barriers (e.g. caste endogamy, or the associated ritual interdictions) operate in Ghana. Socio-cultural compartmentalization with much circulation, inter-
communication, and collaboration is a more accurate description.

Migration has shaped the socio-geographic and economic distribution of ethnic groups in Ghana. Mobility relates to a different dimension, the di-
mension that is laid down by the succession of generations. In this connection, no thing is so significant for Ghana as the spread of literacy and the associated western skills and knowledge. Compared with the thirties, there has been in the past 10 years or so, a veritable explosion of literacy and allied skills due to the great expansion of schooling and of higher education at all levels\(^1\). This was striking among the Tallensi. In 1937 there were no more than half a dozen literate young men and a handful of school children in the whole of the tribal territory. In 1963 the majority of school age children were attending schools, and there was at least one literate young man or young woman in almost every extended family. These literates are in occupations undreamt of by their fathers and grandfathers. They are clerks, teachers, catechists, tax collectors, civil servants, district commissioners, agricultural and veterinary officers, members of parliament, and party officials. Their style of life is in important re-
spects different from that of their parents and grandparents. It is the more striking therefore that their allegiance to their tribal community and the most important features of traditional culture remains unimpaired. But their eco-
nomic, political, and cultural horizons stretch far beyond the tribal boundaries. By residence they remain children of their families, and they maintain their domicile in their family homes, wherever they may be working. When it comes to marriage they adhere to traditional Tallensi customary norms and proce-
dures; in religious allegiance they are pragmatists. Many are nominal Chris-
tian but continue to participate in the traditional rites and ceremonies based on ancestor worship that are still tenaciously maintained by their elders.

A significant factor, in the image they are forming of themselves and of their place in Ghana and in the world at large, is the excellent road system associated with cheap motor transport and other communication facilities. These enable them to travel easily outside the tribal area, to visit the urban centres of modern social life in Southern Ghana, and thus to have personal contact with the centres of national, political and social activities which are also the centres of the increasing western-orientated intellectual and cultural growth, and the focal areas of modern professional, commercial, and industrial devel-

\(^1\) There was, in Ghana, "a vast expansion in the provision of primary and middle school education over the period 1952 to 1960" especially in the North, where the number of primary school pupils rose from 7,000 to 27,000 and the number of middle school pupils rose from 1,000 to 5,000. These figures are taken from Dr. Philip Foster's cogent and exhaus tive study *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, University of Chicago Press, 1965, pp. 186–188. It is particularly relevant to my present theme that Dr. Foster is primarily concerned with the part played by the development of education in generating the mobility that is associated with the process of modernisation in Ghana.
opment. Ghana, it should be remembered, is a small country. It is only 500 miles from the northern frontier to the farthest point on the southern coast, and only about 400 miles wide at its widest part. Even when they are at home however, Tallek and other northerners are able to keep well informed of issues and events in the national community and in the world at large. Transistor radios and newspapers, as well as relatives and friends at secondary schools, in the universities, and in urban occupations and national politics, make sure of this. The traditional societies of Ghana are well on the way into the cultural universe of contemporary western civilization.

What I want to emphasise is that this pattern of occupational, cultural, and socio-political mobility is a countrywide phenomenon in Ghana. Owing primarily to the ease of communication and circulation between rural and urban areas, it is much the same in form amongst young people who are still contained within the traditional tribal communities and the youth of the inland cities and the coastal towns. This creates a dilemma for immigrant groups. In an effort to counteract what appear to them to be the dangers of a drift away from their parental cultural moorings among the young, urban immigrants, both from within Ghana and from other countries, often send their children back to their natal homes for schooling and cultural indoctrination. But this, it seems to me, can hardly be more than a delaying tactic; the signs, everywhere, are that the intergenerational mobility promoted by the westernisation of Ghanaian society by modern political, economic and social change, will have the same result as it has had in other countries subjected to these forces. In Ghana today, migration and mobility are very largely determined by these forces. If they have not yet resulted in the total repudiation of the traditional values of their natal communities by immigrant groups, this is because they still maintain their links with and allegiances to their natal communities, both in Ghana and abroad.

Regular new arrivals from the home community, whether as traders or as seasonal workers or as aspirants to more lasting jobs, maintain the flow of information; and there is always a steady stream of people returning, if only in old age, to finish their days in the home community. Here, again, modern transport and communications are decisive. Nigerians and citizens of the adjacent “Francophone” territories, living in Ghana as immigrants, can nowadays easily and expeditiously go back for short visits by road or by air; they keep in close contact by mail and telephone. The radio and newspapers keep them up-to-date with the events in their home countries. A point of importance is that money is readily transferable (international political and economic regulations permitting) through banks and the postal services. This means that immigrants can fulfill their financial responsibilities to their kinsfolk and their natal community and, in addition, if they wish, build up assets at home against the time when they might wish to return. Seasonal migrants have long been accustomed to take back textile and other goods to their home communities.

An indication of the strength of these links with the home communities is the very marked tendency for immigrants to seek wives from these communities.
Indeed one of the main motives in the thirties, and even nowadays, for the migration to Southern Ghana of peasants in search of work, has been the desire to earn money for a brideprice. It is my impression, from casual enquiry, that there is relatively little inter-ethnic marriage among the various ethnic segments of Ghana, even in élite circles. In spite of their close local, social and economic association, immigrants do not intermarry much with their host community. Here again we meet with signs of caste-like cultural segregation, but too little research has as yet been done on this subject for reliable figures to be available.

We are confronted thus with a well-known paradox of migration and mobility. Given the right international and intra-national political conditions for freedom of movement, and the possibilities of economic absorption, modern facilities enable groups and individuals to migrate easily. These facilities enable migrants, at the same time, to keep strong links with their natal countries and communities. They are not compelled to commit themselves to citizenship, or to cultural and social assimilation, in the countries and regions to which they migrate, so long as political pressure or economic necessity or cultural discrimination is not brought to bear on them. They can participate regularly, or at least periodically, in those strongest of all cultural events that keep groups and individuals loyal to their original social identity, that is to say, the religious festivals and rites of passage distinctive of their home communities. At the same time these conservative opportunities and inducements are opposed by the temporal mobility between generations fostered in the immigrant environment. The children of illiterate ancestor-worshipping immigrants become literate Christians aspiring to white-collar careers and to the style of life that prevails in the society around them. The natal language of the parents, which next to religion, forms the strongest bond of separate identity for a group of immigrants, falls into the background for the children. In Ghana, unlike the United States, first generation locally born people of immigrant origin do not, as a rule, lose their family language; but it becomes more definitively the medium for family, and for ethnically distinctive and closed-off relationships, serving to segregate its speakers from the external system of social and economic relations. It is not surprising to find, in some immigrant groups that have long been settled in Ghana, a tendency to discourage their children from taking advantage of the educational, political, and social developments in the country at large.

This kind of self-sufficiency in an immigrant group is associated with a tendency for the group to close itself off, as a relatively distinct community, within the total society in which it is encapsulated. Emphasis on endogamy and on linguistic or religious or other forms of cultural separation is both an expression of this tendency and a means to its implementation. It reinforces, and is reinforced by, economic specialisation and it often influences the party allegiance of immigrants in modern national politics.

The process here at work is circular. On the one hand, self-sufficiency is strengthened by such internal forces of social and cultural continuity in immigrant groups as a distinctive language or religion, and the more so if these are
continually reinforced through contacts with the home communities. On the other hand, however, the greater the degree to which pluralistic values and patterns of social organisation are accepted or enforced in the total society, the more likelihood is there of self-sufficiency being emphasised and defended among immigrant groups¹.

And here lie the germs of the conflicts and contradictions so agonisingly exemplified by the Ibo tragedy in Nigeria. Pluralism in the total society and self-sufficiency in its component parts are tolerable and even viable over considerable periods of time if the structural boundaries between the parts are consistent and congruent at all levels of social and political structure. Then pluralism can serve as a framework for a generalised social symbiosis. A perfect and balanced caste system would come near to this ideal model. Conflict emerges when incongruities develop between boundary interfaces at different levels. The Ibo immigrants were secure, and were able to maintain in-group self-sufficiency in Northern Nigeria, as long as there was consistency between their civic status as immigrants, their cultural differences from the Hausa, their occupational specialisation, and their distinctive style of life. Conflict arose when, at the political level, their civic status became ambiguous, and at the economic level, claims on a share of the occupational quasi-monopoly they had established had become legitimate and feasible among Hausa literates². As we know from many plural societies, leadership in the revolt of racially or culturally or economically under-privileged communities regularly comes from individuals and groups who have the qualifications, by education or style of life or civic status, to be equal to the privileged elements, and therefore resent and reject the inconsistency between their ethnic situation and their legitimate aspirations. I return to this problem, presently.

Similar incongruities underlie the socially and psychologically pathological manifestations of unbalanced pluralism due to spatial and temporal mobility in a rapidly changing society. But I have not the space here to suggest how vagrancy, prostitution, mental illness, certain classes of crime and so forth, may be related to the pluralism of mobility. It is one of the concerns in the literature on what has come to be called “alienation”³.

Migration, mobility and social change appear to be so intrinsically interlinked that it is well to remind ourselves that there are limits on their covariation, at any rate in the short run. Ghana provides some striking examples of

¹ I am ignoring the racial factor since it is not significant in Ghana. These processes of socio-cultural and economic boundary maintenance in immigrant groups are examined and analysed in a forthcoming study of the Mossi community of Kumasi by Dr. Enid Schildkrout.

² The Ibo story is expounded and its national, social and political context is excellently analysed in James S. Coleman's book Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, 1958. University of California Press. See in particular Ch. 16.

³ Dr. M. J. Field, Search for Security, 1960, Faber and Faber, London, has drawn attention to the personal and social insecurity due to the expansion of the money economy and urbanisation and the strains of competitive striving thus created, that appear to lie behind a good deal of psychosis observed in Southern Ghana. See also Fortes and Mayer, loc. cit., 1966.
what some would describe as structural continuity, others perhaps, as conservatism or as indications of cultural lag. I refer, of course, to the extraordinary tenacity of the ideology, and the associated patterns of social and political organization, of matrilineal descent among the Akan speaking peoples of Ghana. First brought to the attention of the western world more than 200 years ago by the Dutchman, William Bosman, this ideology held its ground till the present day, albeit with modifications on account of the influence of the economic, political and cultural changes set in train in the colonial era. And lest this might be interpreted as a peculiarity of Akan social structure, I might add that matrilineal ideology has shown equal tenacity in the face of social and economic change in other areas of Africa and even in the case of the classically extreme matrilineal system of the Nayar of South India.

A nice current example from Ghana is presented in the study of the development of cocoa farming by Polly Hill. She describes how cocoa farming was established in the early years of this century in Southern Ghana by the incursion into areas of virgin forest of groups of farmers who migrated from older settlements and villages. As chance would have it two main "tribal" (i.e. socio-culturally and historically distinct) groups were concerned in this movement. They live in adjacent localities and have many features of custom and of political and social organization in common. But they also have a number of contrasting customs, above all in their kinship systems. One group had and have Akan matrilineal corporate lineages; the others have patrilineal descent groups without corporate functions.

Now the interesting point is that the former took up land and exploited it for cocoa corporately. The chief entrepreneur would enlist support from brothers, sisters, and sisters' children. The area opened up would be developed en bloc, with portions allocated, in a patchwork distribution, to each participant, not in accordance with his or her monetary contributions to the purchase price—if indeed he or she made such a contribution which they often did not do—but in proportion to his or her status in the lineage segment. Then, at the

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1 In the famous book *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, first published in its English translation in 1705.

2 Compare for example the Plateau Tonga of Zambia, as described in Colson, Elizabeth, 1958, *Marriage and the Family among the Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia*, Manchester University Press. The matrilineal family and descent group system of the Nayar is described and discussed at length, both from the point of view of its traditional forms at different historical periods in the past, and as it emerges under modern conditions, in Schneider, David M. and Gough, Kathleen, 1961, *Matrilineal Kinship*, University of California Press, especially pages 631 ff. Other matrilineal systems are also described and discussed in this book.


death of any member of the lineage his or her cocoa patch would formally revert to the corporately owned pool. It could in theory be reallocated to any other member of the lineage segment but in practice was often taken by his or her heir, who would, however, be a member of the lineage segment anyhow. In the generation after the first migrations younger members of these lineages became educated and often moved into towns to enter modern white-collar or commercial occupations. This shift by mobility did not, however, cost them their rights in the cocoa land owned by the lineage segment in which they, of course, continued to have birthright membership; and the practice developed of leaving the management of the plantation to the head of the lineage segment and pooling all profits for such purposes as providing education for the younger members, paying for funerals of members, and settling debts of members.

In contrast, the patrilineal groups exploited their land by forms of partnership. A number of men, not necessarily kin, would form a “company” each contributing to the purchase price of the land in accordance with his means and ambitions. The chief entrepreneur would buy the rights in a defined stretch of forest in the name of the company. Then the land would be marked out in strips, one for each of the partners, the width of each strip being proportional to the amount of the partner’s contribution; and each strip owner was responsible for growing his cocoa on it in the way he thought best. But the crucial point is this: in contrast to the practice of the matrilineal group, when a strip owner died, his strip was inherited by his sons, who might subdivide it or arrange for one son to buy the others out. Again, in the matrilineal group, members might own a cocoa plot for their lifetime but could not sell or mortgage their plots without the consent of the lineage assembly, a restriction which often resulted in financial assistance being provided by the lineage to prevent the use of the plot being alienated. By contrast, in the partnership arrangement every strip owner was free to dispose of his strip as he pleased. For the matrilineal lineage segment, joint exploitation of the virgin cocoa land resulted automatically from their corporate descent group structure and the laws of property associated with it. The finance was often provided by the head of the segment himself, who acted thus because his wealth would in any case, after his death, revert to the lineage. Again, by contrast, for the partnership, the joint purchase of land was motivated partly by considerations of mutual trust based on common citizenship in their tribal community, common customs, and the wish to live and work together in the cocoa colony, and partly by the political and legal considerations that the chiefs who were selling the land had to sell it in large blocks.

Dr. Hill’s researches have thus brought impressively to light a number of factors relevant to our enquiry. First, there is the evidence that ecological, technical, and economic requirements do not dictate the institutional form assumed by an organization ostensibly formed to realise economic ends. Secondly, there is the evidence of the tenacity with which traditional family and kinship structures are preserved in the face of social and economic changes of apparently radical extent. These types of familial institutions have generally been regarded—especially by economic planners—as impediments to so called
modernisation. But it is evident from this study that these types of familial institutions are remarkably adaptable and do not necessarily collapse when they have to be accommodated to a modern market economy instead of the traditional subsistence and trading economy for which they seem well fitted. Or, to put this the other way round, migration and social and cultural mobility adapted to modern economic and political requirements, and utilising western educational and other media of mobility, can, it appears, be accommodated within the framework of traditional familial institutions and norms, so long as these remain politically and legally accepted. It is also pertinent to my argument to have so clear-cut a case of “tribal” groups that have been neighbours for at least 200 years, speaking each other’s language and whose social and economic and political relations were formerly, and are even more now, intermeshed in innumerable ways, yet vigorously maintaining their separate cultural identities right up to the present day. The groups concerned are among the most progressive and most westernised “tribal” communities in Southern Ghana, largely Christianised and literate, and involved in the modern political and economic structure of Ghana. Yet they continue to hold on to the traditional family and kinship values and ideology which they brought with them when they first migrated to this area, and thus continue to assert their separate cultural identity.

This picture can readily be duplicated from other parts of Africa, and elsewhere, in what is nowadays called the developing nations. Immigrant groups, as I have pointed out, do not inevitably become assimilated into the host society. Indeed they may well remain mutually exclusive if not hostile. An extreme example is that of the immigrant Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia, the two areas of the world which, with Burma, were regarded by Furnivall as proto-typical of the plural society. Furnivall, incidentally, blamed the moral anarchy and absence of common social purpose, which he claimed to detect in these plural societies, on to the colonial system. The persistence of the cleavages and conflicts he described into the modern era of independence, suggests that their roots lie at a deeper level of social structure than he regarded as critical. The level they lie at is that of the determinants and media of expression of group identity. Retention of an ancestral, in-group language, adherence to distinctive religious beliefs and institutions, distinctive food preferences and forms of clothing, above all distinctive norms and patterns of family organisation, kinship relations, and marriage, are likely to be much more significant in this connection than external political and economic and geographical relations.

But let me go back to the Tallensi. My own enquiries in 1963, and the figures one could get from the 1960 Census, showed that the only immigrants (as opposed to occasional visitors) in the tribal area at that date were a couple of white missionaries, two or three petty traders and artisans, and a dozen or so school teachers and clerks. Taleland never was and is not now a reception area for immigrants, if only because of its penurious subsistence economy. On the other side, migration from Taleland to Southern Ghana is nowadays very
substantial. Up to half of the men in the age group 20–45 tend to be away at any time and a correspondingly marked proportion of the women of child-bearing age. Labour migration, principally of men who went to work in the towns, on the mines, or joined the army or the police force in Southern Ghana, was significant even in the thirties but not on this scale. Estimates made in 1938–39 suggested that about 10% of the able-bodied adult males were away, mainly in Southern Ghana, at the height of the dry season. The economic incentives of migration to the South are perhaps even stronger now than they were in the thirties. The unskilled labourer, aiming to accumulate money and goods and eventually to return to his natal community for good, is still the most numerous representative of this level of migration. But modern educational qualifications and the opportunities provided by the expanding post-war commercial and industrial economy, fostered by the political and social developments of the fifties and sixties, have conduced to both the quantitative increase and qualitative change in the pattern of migration, in effect converting it to a pattern of inter-generational upward mobility. As a result of the great development in education since the attainment of independence in Ghana, a proportion which may well be as much as thirty percent of young men and women in the 20–30 age group is literate; and they tend to gravitate, predominantly, to occupations in the civil service, in business firms, in school teaching, in technical and professional services, and so forth, either at home or in other parts of the country. The corresponding development among the non-literate adults is their increasing participation in the market economy as traders and middlemen. Add to this the spreading influence of the Christian churches and it can be seen that new levels of aspiration and schemes of value capable of stimulating upward mobility have emerged in this tribal area.

In contrast to the present state of affairs, in the thirties, if men went to work in Southern Ghana for any length of time, it meant virtually cutting themselves off from home and family. Months and indeed years might pass without an absent son or brother or father being heard from or of, and remittances were rarely sent back home. As previously noted, the native-born literates could be counted on the fingers of one hand; there was no radio, newspapers which reached the tribal territory came only to the European or Southern Ghanaian officials. The tribal society was pretty well self-contained and wholly traditional. Knowledge of the outside world was gained, and contacts with it were made, either through officials such as the District Commissioners, or through the labour migrants returning with their restricted and semi-legendary version of what this world was like. At that time migration from the tribal territory was apt to be deplored by the people themselves. They regarded it as primarily a regrettable response to economic need, or as due to ambitions which were linked with a search for economic opportunity or for escape from familial and lineage authority. Emigrants rarely returned home, as they do nowadays, for a short visit between stretches of work abroad. However, it was quite common for men to return to their home settlements in their old age or after a number of years abroad. They then became quickly reabsorbed into
the traditional ways of life, which had been hardly affected by alien cultural and social forces.

The picture today is very different. As I have already remarked, the literate young people are aware of the world outside and familiar with political, social, and cultural ideas and practices, and with the public affairs, of distant countries as well as of their own country. They have a notion of what it means to be a citizen of Ghana, apart from being a Tallensi. Their scheme of values and their world view is infused with western ideas and theories. Their social horizon is not confined to the tribe. And through them and through other channels of information, even the non-literate, older people are significantly aware of what is going on in the world outside. While remaining tenaciously and unquestionably Tallensi in their general scheme of values, their orientation to the future has changed.

Migration and mobility are not the causes of this expansion of the intellectual and social horizon of the Tallensi, and the consequent change in their conception of their cultural potential, their social self-image, and their political state. In some ways the present pattern of migration and mobility is, rather, a result and a reflection of these changes. But they have also, by a sort of feedback process, played a part in facilitating these changes. It is the more noteworthy therefore that the traditional social order of the Tallensi has not yet suffered the kind of disruption, or some might prefer to say revolutionary transformation, that similar developments are reported to have caused in other parts of Africa.

One of the main reasons for this is the development in communications and in the transport system to which I have already drawn attention. Ease of travel and communications means that literates can stay happily at home if they can find suitable jobs, without feeling cut off from towns and the larger social environment. The whole country is open to traders based in the tribal area. Women can travel just as conveniently as men. In short, emigration is no longer frowned upon or feared. It is only deplored in so far as it removes manpower needed to keep up the farms at home or to conduct the social and ritual affairs of the community. Emigrants nowadays keep in regular touch with the home settlement by letter and telegram and by visits especially at the times of the annual festivals, and there is reciprocal communication in the opposite direction. Thus Tallensi now think of Ghana as a more or less unified social space and arena for their economic activities and social aspirations. There is no longer the old feeling that if a son went south he might be lost for years or for good. Emigration is understood as a means to mobility, in the sense of seeking greater opportunities without having to cast off tribal allegiance. And it is striking how in fact loyalty to the home community and culture now waxes more strongly than ever among literates and other people normally living and working abroad. To be sure this has brought new strains and conflicts in its train, but these cannot be discussed in the present context.

The story of A. is characteristic of modern developments. A. is the son of one of my best friends and informants of the thirties. I knew him as a small boy.
Venturing out of Taleland at the beginning of the war he went into the armed forces and was there taught to read and write. He early showed a shrewd head for business. Today he lives in Accra, where he is a businessman and entrepreneur of substantial wealth with a string of wives—all Tallensi—and a good deal of property. His only brother stayed at home and in due course succeeded to their father. He has remained illiterate. But A. maintains very firmly his ties with his brother, his kin, and his home community. He sent some of his children home to live with his brothers, and to go to school in Tongo, with the aim of ensuring that they should become imbued with the proper Tallensi values. A. himself periodically drives up to Tongo in one of his cars and members of his family from there constantly visit him. He has financed the rebuilding in modern style of his paternal dwelling house. According to Dr. Keith Hart (personal communication) he played a key part in the manoeuvres that were, last year, going on to find a successor for the late chief, and he succeeded eventually in financing the election of his brother to this much coveted chiefship. And underneath all of this he remains a Tallensi, consulting diviners when his children are ill, sending home money for the purchase of sacrificial animals, paying bride price for his wives, and so on. On a small scale the same patterns of relations between members of a family living in Southern Ghana and those who have remained at home are found in many other families. At the same time, such mobile emigrants as A. are expert in making the most of the opportunities open to them in the cosmopolitan urban environment. They exploit its economic opportunities with skill and accommodate very successfully to the social and political context in which they have to operate, far different though this is from their original tribal environment.

In short, the social and political changes I have described have led to a great increase in both migration from and mobility within the tribal boundaries of the Tallensi. But far from causing the disintegration of the tribal society and the extinction of the traditional culture, they have conduced to a reinforcement of tribal loyalties and the beginnings of movements to reshape the traditional culture. It was striking and impressive to see, when my wife and I were there in 1963, with what pride and gusto literates returned migrants accustomed to the sophistication of the towns, school children, and students home for the holidays, joined with their traditionalist elders and stay-at-home kinsfolk in the rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations of the harvest festival.

Many similar instances could be cited which show how the migration and mobility made possible by some modern political and social changes enhance individual development, make opportunities for new kinds and levels of achievement and aspiration, diffuse skills and values new to Africa and in other ways conduce to advantages and desirable modifications in ways and standards of

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1 This brief analysis of the part played by migration and mobility in the complex interweaving of tradition and change, in the current stage of the social and cultural development of tribal groups like the Tallensi is extensively documented and its implications are closely examined from a theoretical point of view in the forthcoming study by Dr. Hart, previously referred to. (See his paper in this Journal).
living without necessarily destroying the traditional ways and value systems. What cannot be too much emphasised is the fact that these positive developments are made possible by the expansion of the political structure and the cultural field within which migration and mobility are free and legitimate. Economic advances such as the development of modern industries, and the diffusion of western skills such as literacy, or western techniques for dealing, for instance, with problems of health and disease, cannot by themselves thus canalise migration and mobility to personal and social advantage.

There is, however, also a negative side to migration and mobility. Thus I have explained that, in certain contexts of political and social structure, migrant and mobile groups and individuals hold on tenaciously over long stretches of time to the social and cultural identity that is rooted in their home communities. Now if we consider again the history of Ibo migration in Nigeria, we cannot avoid concluding that persistent adherence to their homebased familial and kinship values and the retention of their loyalties to and links with their home communities, played an important part in the success formerly achieved by Ibo migrants in adapting to and exploiting the socio-economic environments they moved into. We can see the same process at work among other endo-migrant groups like the Tallensi in the areas of Southern Ghana into which they migrate and also among exo-migrant groups like the Mossi. There are strong indications, to say the least, that immigrants and mobiles often succeed in their adoptive socio-economic environment, both in striking out along new paths of individual life style and activity and in promoting innovations, where the equally able “insiders” lag behind through being too closely bound up in the constraints of their own social system. I need hardly remind readers of the theories that have grown up around the concept of the “marginal” man. Now the point that strikes me is that the preservation by migrants and mobiles of their distinctive tribal and familial ties and values can serve as a social and psychological sheet anchor, so to speak, for them. For the first generation, at any rate, it may serve as a buffer against going adrift in an alien social environment. Having a home-community to go back to in crisis or personal disaster, a community and a culture that serves as an independent focus of their cohesion and a sanction for their mutual support, can provide a secure basis for their sense of identity and unity as a group, especially if there is opposition from the long-vested interests and organised unity of the host society, as well as confrontation with the solidarities of other immigrant elements. This, I suggest, may be correlated with successful adaptation of migrant groups in their adoptive social environments—provided, of course, they are permitted to adapt freely, by the political and social policies of the host community.

But there is another side to this. If we take the case of the Ibo again, it is arguable that it was their very success as migrants and mobiles that eventually became their doom in Northern Nigeria. It has been claimed that it was the combination of individual success in business, professional and service occupations, with Ibo in-group, or in more modern terminology nationalistic, solidarity, that provoked the hostility which ruined them. We could go even
further and speculate—remembering such parallels as the Nazi destruction of Europe's Jews—as to whether this hostility was not in large part, at least, projected on to the Ibo as an expression of suspicions and discontents generated within the host society by tensions and conflicts internal to their social system. Be this as it may, it is evident that where racial, cultural, or economic barriers are deeply entrenched in the structure of a plural society, the more internally cohesive and socio-culturally differentiated an immigrant group is, the more chance there is of friction and xenophobia developing between it and the host society.

But there is yet one more point that I must draw attention to. To put it summarily, I would argue that migration and mobility lie at the heart of modern nationalistic movements in Africa. First, of course, there is the well known fact that élite mobility—that is, western schooling and higher education at home and abroad, residence in Europe or America, confrontation with the political and social institutions of these countries, and eventual entrance into professions and occupations in the westernised socio-economic sector of the life of their own countries—has been the *sine qua non* for the emergence of the political leaders of the "new nations" of Africa. The life story of Nnamdi Azikiwe, or Kwame Nkrumah, or indeed of any other nationalist African leader, eloquently documents this. But what I want to emphasise is a different facet of this development. Before the colonial period peoples like the Ibo—or on a small scale the Tallensi (and, of course, numerous other African tribal clusters)—never thought of themselves as forming a unitary tribe or national entity. Neighbouring localities and clans of the same cultural and linguistic cluster were often at war with one another and there was no over-riding political framework encompassing all the separate segments. Colonial administrative policies often imposed some degree of formal unity on such clusters. But a real sense of tribal or national unity was never thus created. It was in the towns, among the migrant expatriates from their natal communities, that the impulse towards inter-clan and cross-segment cooperation arose and the idea of tribal unity took shape. It was in the towns that the Ibo immigrants, for example, formed the mutual aid association of the common West African type described by Kenneth Little and his colleagues which soon took on a political complexion and became the nuclei of wider nationalistic movements. It is in the industrial centres, and in the socially heterogeneous, politically modern and culturally sophisticated towns like Ac-

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2 This is well documented in Middleton, John and Tait, David. *Tribes Without Rulers*, 1959. Routledge, London.
3 Little, Kenneth. *West African Urbanization*, 1964, Cambridge University Press. A striking "Francophone" parallel to the processes and tendencies demonstrated by Little mainly for "Anglophone" countries is to be found in Meillassoux, Claude, *Urbanization in an African Community: Voluntary Associations in Bamako* 1968, University of Washington Press, Seattle, Wash., U.S.A. Meillassoux draws a picture of the role of migration and mobility in the urbanization process in Bamako that corresponds closely to the account I have here given of these processes in Ghana.
cra and Kumasi that we nowadays find the literate élite of the northern Ghanaian tribes associating together and emphasising the affinities among their natal languages and cultures in contradistinction to the socially or culturally distinct groups they are in contact with. Mutual aid associations have emerged, often under the patronage of wealthy or influential men like my friend A., and it is significant that these tend to include men and women of all northern Ghanaian tribes, though in A's case the Tallensi predominate. The germs of a northern nationalism are there. All that is wanting, perhaps, is for more northerners to receive some higher education (or training at military academies!) at home or abroad, to spend some time in Europe or America and to gravitate into western type élite professions and occupations, for the ground to be ready for a northern Nkrumah. Add to this some experience of discrimination or frustration, actual or assumed, in an unbalanced plural system, and separatist demands could easily flare up.

Finally, mention should also be made of the penalties that often accompany inter-generational mobility, not only in migrant groups but also within well established communities in their home territories. In West Africa this is conspicuously exemplified by the élites in all walks of life whose occupational and social status is due mainly to their western education and to the scope provided by modern, western-type developments in their society. Accompanied usually by the adoption in greater or less measure of western-type styles of living and material aspirations, as well as western ideas about such matters as health and disease and the natural world, movement into this stratum of society may lead to serious conflicts over traditional ideals and norms. The educated élites tend to marry differently from their parents, in the top professions sometimes, even, inter-tribally or cross-racially; they tend to live in different kinds of houses and to eat different kinds of food, and, in general, to lead a life that is very different from that of their parents or grandparents. This is not inevitably disruptive of good relationships between the generations, within families. But it cannot avoid giving rise to some strains, and already there is evidence that psychological illness may be increasing in transitional sectors of modern African society. Occupational mobility also follows upon migration when a non-literate traditional farmer or herdsman leaves his home to work as a labourer or petty trader or even a semi-skilled hand on a mine or at the docks in an area far from his home. In these cases, too, there is often a price to be paid, as is reflected in rising crime rates, increasing psychosis, and the spread of venereal and other urban diseases among this class of migrants. I will not venture to strike a balance sheet; and I doubt if it will ever be possible.

1 Signs of this have appeared even among the Tallensi. Cf. Fortes, M. and Mayer, D. Y., loc. cit., 1966. A wealth of confirmatory evidence for Southern Ghana is provided in Dr. Field's previously cited study.