Foreign African Workers in Ghana

N. O. ADDO [1]

MIGRATION FOR EMPLOYMENT has always been a feature of West African life. Large numbers of workers have left their homes and travelled hundreds of miles in search of more remunerative employment—or any employment at all—often crossing national boundaries (which it is true have only recently begun to take on much meaning). Over the years, this migrant labour force, some of it permanent, some seasonal, has undoubtedly made an invaluable contribution to economic development in several countries of the region, yet in more recent times there has been a tendency among the host countries to restrict or regulate these migratory movements. One such measure is the Aliens Compliance Order adopted in Ghana. The following article begins by briefly tracing the history of migration into that country, and describes the policies adopted by successive governments to deal (or not to deal) with it. It goes on to consider the principal characteristics of the present foreign African worker population in Ghana and the effects of the 1969 Order, before concluding with some general remarks on the future outlook for immigration policies in West Africa.

I. The historical and political background

Brief history of migration into Ghana

The history of foreign migration into Ghana may for present purposes conveniently be divided into three broad phases corresponding to the main stages in the evolution of the country's political status.[2]

PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

As regards the first (or pre-modern) phase, information is scanty and no systematic trends are discernible. Extensive movements of

[1] University of Ghana, Legon.

[2] For a fuller account see N. O. Addo: " Immigration into Ghana: some social and economic implications of the Aliens Compliance Order of 18th November 1969 ", in *Ghana Journal of Sociology,* Feb. 1970, pp. 20-42.

members of the Wangara ethnic group from Mali are reported to have occurred during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, spreading the Islamic faith and leaving their mark on all the African Empires, including the Ashantis of Ghana; thus before 1821, when the first European travellers arrived in Kumasi, capital of the Ashanti kingdom, the Wangaras already held important positions in local society, but although they profoundly influenced mystical practices and the social administration of the Ashanti State, they did not penetrate the Akan culture itself.[1] It is known, too, that the Hausas, Fulanis, Moshis and Arabs traditionally traded in slaves and merchandise, particularly in the upper parts of Ghana, long before the European traders entered the market there. These activities, however, were limited in scale and space and did not have any lasting economic impact.

COLONIAL ERA

The next (or modern transitional) phase, which began around 1870-80, witnessed systematic immigration into the country. The introduction of new mining techniques, and of cash-crop agriculture in the form of cocoa growing, triggered off a large demand for manual workers, the more so since the local inhabitants of the areas initially affected tended to frown on manual labour. A large number of the labourers recruited were foreign immigrants, mainly from Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, Togo and Nigeria, who were attracted in particular by the prospect of earning considerably higher wages than they could find at home.

As the colony became progressively modernised and diversified, the immigrants tended increasingly to enter other fields, particularly petty trading and small-scale commercial activity, while some found employment in infrastructural development projects such as the construction of roads, railways, bridges, harbours, schools, hospitals, etc., which were pressed forward by the British colonial administration early in the twentieth century.

Official records indicate that towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, certain immigrant tribes, and also local tribes, had begun to show preferences for particular types of work.[2] For example, Vais, Mendis and Timmanis from Sierra Leone, Krus and Basas from Liberia, and some tribes from the northern Gold Coast were often employed underground in the mines, whilst Yorubas and Ibos from Nigeria, and Moshis and Grushies from the northern Gold Coast refused such work and would at best only carry loads in the mines. The Fantis would accept only clerical jobs, since they had received some formal education from mission schools along the coast,

[1] Jean Rouch: *Notes on migrations into the Gold Coast*, First report of the mission carried out in the Gold Coast from March to December 1954 (Accra, 1954), p. 4.

[2] *Colonial Annual Report*, No. 426 (Colonial Office of the Gold Coast, 1903).

whilst the Gas from Accra normally expected to become artisans, since they had received relevant training from the mission institutes in Accra.

As far back as in 1905, some 3,500 labourers were entering the Gold Coast Colony each year for employment in the mines or as carriers, labourers or scavengers.[1] They were usually engaged for 6 or 12 months but no particular restrictions were imposed on them.

From these accounts, it is clear that foreign immigrant workers were actively involved in the modernisation of the country from the very outset.

The Second World War, however, in which colonial subjects played an important role, produced a slump in most West African countries, including Ghana, with a concomitant decrease in population movements.

After the war, immigration resumed and continued to expand. As before, the newcomers found work mainly in rural areas (cocoa farming, mines) and in the private sector, although some obtained employment as unskilled labourers in the increasing number of public projects. Others, in particular immigrants from Nigeria and Niger, joined in the prospection for diamonds in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although representing an important part of the country's labour force, these immigrants remained in relatively lower-paid and low-status jobs in which the local inhabitants were uninterested; in due course, they consolidated their positions in these sectors, some of them forming small companies and workshops, and thus gradually improved their social and material situation.

INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER

The achievement of political independence in 1957 was first accompanied by a new upturn in immigration. This was due in the first place to the increased tempo of economic development introduced by the first indigenous Government, involving infrastructural and administrative expansion, and the establishment of new development corporations and major public works projects (e.g. Tema harbour, Akosombo hydro-electric scheme), in which large numbers of immigrants were employed, mainly as labourers. A second factor of importance which stimulated immigration during this period was purely political, inasmuch as, pursuing its vigorous policy of African unity, the Government virtually invited foreigners—not only workers but investors, refugees and freedom fighters—to enter the country.

After 1962-63, Ghana's economy began to deteriorate for various reasons (in particular, because the world market price of cocoa had fallen to exceptionally low levels). In an attempt to arrest this decline, the Government, among other things, placed restrictions on foreign remittances. This decision adversely affected a large number of foreign

[1] *Colonial Annual Report*, No. 534 (1905).

workers, especially those from Upper Volta and Nigeria, most of whom remitted part of their earnings to their home countries. Some of them, particularly the less permanently employed, became discouraged and returned home. Although no statistics were kept of this reverse migration, it is testified to by cocoa farmers, who experienced difficulty in obtaining alternative labour.

Other factors probably contributed to the decline in immigration. Thus, the price of cocoa in neighbouring countries such as Togo and the Ivory Coast was higher than in Ghana, so that migrant workers may have been offered more attractive wages in these areas. Furthermore, following their achievement of political independence in the early 1960s, those countries which formerly were the source of large numbers of immigrants had also begun to make increasing use of local labour for the expansion of their own economies. Moreover, the political situation in Ghana itself was not at all stable or clear; political tensions existed which may have hindered the free migration of labour into the country. Immigration by no means came to a complete halt, however, and it can be assumed that seasonal migration [1] at least continued, if at a slower pace.

In February 1966 the Government was overthrown by a military coup which brought, if not economic recovery, at least a measure of political peace. The military régime was more inwardly oriented than its predecessor and sought above all to restore the country's economic fortunes, a policy which, while not influencing migration directly, probably encouraged some departed immigrants to return. A number of refugees from the civil war in Eastern Nigeria are also said to have entered the country during this period, but substantiating records are lacking.

The above comments reflect the practical situation. In the realm of policy, however, the economic decline, the rise in unemployment and pressures to provide opportunities and outlets for Ghanaian nationals resulted in various attempts to control and restrict immigration, beginning with the promulgation of the Aliens Act, 1963, and Aliens (Amendment) Act, 1965, and culminating in the issuance in November 1969 of an Aliens Compliance Order drastically enforcing their provisions. These developments, and the reasons for and effects of this legislation, are treated in detail in the next section.

Policies of successive governments

THE PERIOD OF "LAISSEZ-FAIRE"

During the colonial period a very liberal attitude was taken to the immigration of foreign African workers. At that time, there were

[1] A great deal of seasonal migration takes place into Ghana from the neighbouring countries of Togo, Upper Volta and the Ivory Coast, particularly during the cocoa harvesting period (November to January).

virtually no national boundaries in West Africa and there was a long-standing tradition of free labour movement, migration being conditioned by the prevailing social and economic circumstances. The Gold Coast, having no separate legislation in the field, came as a colony under British immigration laws. However, the colonial administration attached no particular priority to the control of population movements, and migrants entered and left the country freely, their movements and activities virtually unregulated.

While there is no evidence that the British administration offered direct help or incentives to prospective immigrants, labour, of course, played an important part in the exploitation of the country's natural resources for the metropolitan market and in the infrastructural development schemes set on foot in furtherance of colonial policies. Thus the immigration of foreign workers may have been directly or indirectly stimulated by the mining and development activities, already referred to, of the colonial administration. Certainly, the expatriate mining companies and indigenous cocoa farmers freely hired the migrant workers, who indeed formed the bulk of their labour force.

On the other hand, it might be said that some immigration from French-held African territories early in this century took place under economic pressure, inasmuch as the high taxation in those territories compelled workers to find wage-earning employment in the Gold Coast in order to be able to meet their tax obligations. Fundamentally, however, immigration was left to run its natural course.

Although in theory the period of *laissez-faire* came to an end with the achievement of political independence in March 1957, the new legislation on citizenship introduced in May of that year did not seriously affect the rate of immigration, which indeed, as already indicated, for a time tended rather to accelerate.

FIRST MOVES TOWARDS CONTROL: THE ALIENS ACTS, 1963 AND 1965

The first real effort by Ghana to establish firm laws on immigration was contained in the provisions of the Aliens Act, 1963 (Act No. 160), subsequently amended by the Aliens (Amendment) Act, 1965 (Act No. 265). The 1963 Act sought to rationalise the existing laws on immigration and incorporate them in a common legislative system by consolidating, with modifications, enactments relating to the immigration, residence, employment and deportation of aliens. Among other things, the Act provided that every alien should possess the necessary legal documents for residence in the country.

These Acts, however, were not strictly enforced on the immigrant population at large, the majority of whom did not qualify for residence since they lacked the necessary papers. The result was that immigrants continued to enter the country, but now illegally, by unauthorised routes.

Another step towards the introduction of effective immigration measures was taken in 1965 with the appointment of an Advisory Committee on Population to consider ways and means of formulating a population policy for Ghana. This Committee noted with concern the high rate of immigration, especially of unskilled workers, from neighbouring countries, and its adverse effects on the rising unemployment rate. On the other hand, in the face of the liberal policy pursued by the Government in this field, the Committee (on which the ruling political party, inter alia, was represented) was unable to recommend any new action. Indeed, one of its recommendations stated that " in consonance with Ghana's policy of friendship with all countries, and especially in the interest of African unity, it would be undesirable for the Government to take any direct steps to stop immigration of Africans into the country ".

Nevertheless, the Committee did recommend that existing regulations on migration should be enforced. It is clear that had the Government acted accordingly, foreign immigration would have been seriously affected and the vast majority of immigrants, who would not have qualified for residence under the 1963 and 1965 Aliens Acts, would have had to return home. But the recommendation was allowed to remain a dead letter and in practice immigration continued freely, influenced only by economic and social conditions in Ghana and the interests of the immigrants themselves.

After the military coup of February 1966, the search for ways of controlling immigration and regulating the activities of immigrants continued under the new régime, which issued a number of decrees on this subject, in particular defining economic areas in which aliens were not to be allowed to operate. For example, aliens were prohibited from entering or remaining in diamond-producing areas (it being suspected that they were participating in illegal diamond dealings), from carrying on certain types of retail and wholesale trade, and from starting up certain small-scale enterprises employing 30 persons or less (in this case, with the ultimate aim of encouraging Ghanaian businessmen to operate in these sectors, by removing foreign competition). The new régime also instituted an immigrant quota review, designed to restrict the entry of foreign workers into business concerns to persons with scarce skills not available locally, as well as to encourage foreign entrepreneurs to train and use local talent.

Another measure which had some indirect effect on immigration was the currency devaluation in July 1967, which added to the difficulties already faced by immigrants in remitting part of their earnings home.

ENFORCEMENT: THE ALIENS COMPLIANCE ORDER, 1969

In due course, the military authorities appointed a subcommittee of the Ghana Manpower Board to take another look at the question

of a national population policy for Ghana. The subcommittee expressed concern about the effect of immigration on capital outflows in the form of remittances, the slow rate of assimilation of immigrant groups, the effects on unemployment of competition between foreign and Ghanaian workers, etc. It recommended that immigration should primarily be a channel for obtaining needed skills and stimulating social and economic development, and that the Government should enforce the provisions of the Aliens Act, 1963, and Aliens (Amendment) Act, 1965, particularly as regards the securing by intending immigrants of work permits and other necessary documents; it further recommended the institution of procedures for the registration and periodic reporting of aliens, and measures to restrict and regulate the sale or lease of land and other property to aliens.

These recommendations were accepted, and in March 1969 became the official immigration policy of Ghana. In August 1969, the military régime handed over power to a new Government which continued to implement this policy, and in November 1969 pursued it to its logical conclusion by issuing the Aliens Compliance Order, requiring strict enforcement of the provisions of the 1963 and 1965 Acts. This Order called on all aliens to obtain immigration papers as required by these Acts within a period of two weeks from the date of its publication, failing which they would have to leave the country.

The circumstances explaining this hardening of official policy were broadly speaking as follows. In the first place, Ghana had been labouring under serious economic difficulties ever since the later days of the first civilian administration, and this situation had worsened after the 1966 coup. Unemployment had been rising steadily, and as already noted, the impression existed in both official and unofficial quarters that the presence of large numbers of foreigners had been reducing employment opportunities for Ghanaians. After the 1966 coup, furthermore, certain local business groups emerged which exerted strong pressure on the military régime and subsequently on the new Government to give Ghanaians priority in fields which had previously been monopolised by aliens. Politically, also, the new Government had pledged itself to solve the unemployment problem and to raise the living conditions of the population. Thus the Government was committed to exploring all means whereby it might create the desired economic opportunities for Ghanaians.

Moreover, rightly or wrongly, the impression had taken root that a relatively high proportion of the hard-core criminals in Ghana (e.g. smugglers, armed robbers, persons indulging in corrupt practices) were aliens. Be this as it may, the courts had been increasingly ordering the deportation of alien criminals, and some prominent citizens had even questioned whether it was in the interest of social stability to have groups of aliens within the country at all. Indeed, such arguments are still to be found in Ghanaian newspapers today.

All these factors may have influenced the Government's decision to enforce the existing laws on immigration. In practice, action to secure compliance was left to the police and immigration officers.

A few weeks after the order came into force, however, an important amendment was made to it in the shape of an exemption order allowing all aliens working in agriculture (especially cocoa farms) and mining to remain in Ghana indefinitely, on condition that their Ghanaian employers obtain the necessary legal documents on their behalf. This exemption order came too late to prevent large numbers of immigrants returning home, but it did preserve the country to some extent from the immediate and total loss of migrant labourers who traditionally constitute a large proportion of the workforce in these important export sectors.

In January 1972 a second military coup took place during which the Government was overthrown. Incidentally, one of the criticisms levelled against it related to its inhuman implementation of the Aliens Compliance Order. This second military régime has since displayed a more cautious approach to the immigration question, and appears to be seeking means of promoting co-operation and unity among West African countries, including a policy on labour migration. Since it took over, there have been virtually no official announcements hostile to immigrants, and enforcement of the Order[1] has apparently been relaxed. Press reports suggest, however, that the local population as a whole is not very favourable to such a liberalisation.

II. The situation in recent years

Composition, activities and conditions of work and life of the foreign African population

ORIGIN AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The only adequate statistical evidence on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of foreigners in Ghana comes from the 1960 Population Census. The Census enumerated 827,000 persons of foreign origin, representing 12.3 per cent of the country's population of 6,727,000 at that time. Of these, 98 per cent were Africans, most of whom came from the neighbouring countries of Togo and Upper Volta and from Nigeria, and the rest from the Ivory Coast, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Dahomey and Liberia; less than 1 per cent came from East, South and North Africa (see table 1). By 1970, when a new Census was taken (detailed results of which are not yet available), the foreign element had declined to 562,000 or 6.6 per cent of the then total popula-

[1] The economic and political repercussions of this Order are examined in greater detail at the end of the next section.

TABLE 1. ORIGIN AND OTHER DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN POPULATION IN GHANA, 1960

Total foreign population	827 000
Foreign as percentage of total population	12.3
Percentage of foreign population recorded as African	98.0
Percentage of foreign African population from:	
Togo	34.5
Upper Volta	24.0
Nigeria	23.7
Ivory Coast	6.7
Dahomey	3.8
Niger	3.0
Mali and Senegal	2.5
Liberia	1.1
Rest of Africa	0.7
Percentage of foreigners:	
Aged 15 years and over who had resided in Ghana for less than 18 months at the time of the Census	81.0
Resident in rural areas	66.4 (78.4)
In the economically active age group (15-64 years)	65.0 (54.0) [1]
Average age of foreign population (years):	
All foreigners	23.9 (21.4) [1]
Born abroad	30.6
Born in Ghana	7.8
Sex ratio (males per 100 females) of foreign population:	
All foreigners	146 (97) [1]
Born abroad	175
Born in Ghana	107

[1] Figures in parentheses show corresponding data for the Ghanaian population.

Source: The data on which this and subsequent tables are based are from Census Office: *1960 Population Census of Ghana* (Accra, 1964), Vols. III and IV, and idem: *Advance report of Volumes III and IV* (Accra, 1962).

tion, for reasons explained below. According to the 1960 Census, over one-third of the foreign population had been born in Ghana, but that much of the immigration was very recent was evidenced by the fact that four-fifths of all aliens aged 15 years and over were found to have been in residence for less than 18 months prior to the Census.

The demographic characteristics of the foreign population contrasted with those of the indigenous Ghanaian population in certain important respects. For example, a higher proportion of foreigners than of Ghanaians

were in the economically active age group, and they were also slightly older. The foreigners, particularly females and those born in Ghana, showed a greater propensity to reside and work in urban areas. The ratio of males to females was far higher for the foreigners than for the indigenous population, and they had considerably fewer children.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The foreign worker households were slightly smaller than the indigenous, averaging 3.5 as against 4.3 persons respectively (including parents, children, relatives and occasionally non-relatives). Only one-eighth of the foreign female population were heads of households, compared with nearly a quarter of the indigenous females; on the other hand some 70 per cent of the foreign males, but only 60 per cent of the indigenous males, were heads of households, the reason being that the practice of maternal inheritance is more widespread among the local population than among the immigrant tribes. A large proportion of the seasonal migrants leave their families behind while they go to Ghana to work for specified—often short—periods, returning home only to repeat the process. Of those who had been resident in Ghana for more than a year at the time of the 1960 Census, however, the majority were married, particularly the females, who either accompanied their husbands or joined them at a later date. The Census also showed that almost the same proportion of foreign as of indigenous males were married (59 per cent). The comparable figures for foreign and indigenous females were 88 per cent and 75 per cent. The proportion of married immigrants was higher among earlier than among more recent arrivals, and also among country than among town dwellers (this also applied to Ghanaians). Thus a high proportion of immigrants were single on arrival and married later. The extent of intermarriage with local people is not known, but there is evidence that this does occur, particularly as regards aliens resident in the northern parts of the country where the culture and traditions of the local people are closer to their own. There is also a great amount of intermarriage among the Togolese living in Ghana and their kith and kin, the Ewes of the Volta Region. The Nigerians on the other hand appear to marry almost exclusively among themselves.

Another important social characteristic of the foreign workers was their very low level of education. Least educated of all were those born abroad and living in rural areas; in all categories, the indigenous population was significantly more educated than the foreign, both among males and females and in rural and urban areas (see table 2). Among the foreigners themselves, the local-born were better educated, but many of them were still too young to have entered the labour force. Of those in the labour force aged 15 years and over, 85 per cent of the males had never been to school compared with 67 per cent of the indi-

TABLE 2. EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF PERSONS OF WORKING AGE (15 YEARS AND OVER), 1960

(%)

Status	Ghanaian population		Foreign population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
School attendance:				
Never attended school	67.1	88.9	84.8	95.7
Formerly attended	25.7	9.2	13.0	3.7
Currently attending	7.2	1.9	2.2	0.6
Type of education received:				
Elementary (i.e. primary, Arabic [1], middle school)	91.0	95.0	95.0	97.0
Higher (i.e. secondary, teacher training, commercial, technical, university)	9.0	5.0	5.0	3.0

[1] Refers to Koranic teaching.

genous males (but 30 per cent of the few foreigners already of working age born in Ghana had had school education, compared with only 13 per cent of those born abroad). A mere 3.7 per cent of female foreign workers had been to school, compared with 9.2 per cent of the local female working population. The type of education received was also barely higher than elementary; of the few African immigrant workers having arrived in Ghana with some kind of education, over 98 per cent had not gone beyond the elementary grade. The more educated elements of the foreign labour force and of the indigenous population tended to be concentrated in urban areas because of the presence there both of suitable employment opportunities and of educational facilities, which during the pre-independence era in particular were largely confined, especially as regards higher education, to the towns.[1]

EMPLOYMENT

The only adequate information on this also comes from the 1970 Population Census; it shows that the employment rate among the foreign labour force was relatively high, but that fewer foreign than indigenous females were in employment, owing to the higher marriage rates of the former. Thus the proportion of the male and female labour force in employment was 87 per cent and 40 per cent among the foreign, and 82 per cent and 55 per cent among the indigenous population,

[1] This position is gradually changing with the introduction of better educational facilities in the provincial and rural areas.

TABLE 3. TYPES OF ACTIVITY OF GHANAIAN AND FOREIGN WORKERS, 1960 (%)

Type of activity	Ghanaian workers		Foreign workers					
			All foreigners		Born in Ghana		Born abroad	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Both sexes:								
Employed	64.9	69.4	70.8	70.0	57.7	59.0	73.6	71.6
Unemployed	8.0	3.1	7.9	4.3	9.5	6.2	7.6	4.0
Homemakers [1]	15.3	19.2	15.8	21.3	22.4	28.1	14.4	20.2
Students [2]	7.6	3.8	2.2	1.2	7.4	4.0	1.0	0.8
Disabled and others	4.1	4.5	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.7	3.4	3.4
Males:								
Employed	.	.	83.5	89.0	70.3	81.2	85.6	90.0
Unemployed	.	.	9.7	5.6	13.1	8.2	9.2	5.2
Homemakers [1]	.	.	0.4	0.6	0.5	1.2	0.3	0.6
Students [2]	.	.	2.7	1.8	12.5	6.6	1.2	1.2
Disabled and others	.	.	3.7	3.0	3.6	2.8	3.7	3.0
Females:								
Employed	.	.	46.7	37.4	44.4	34.1	47.4	38.1
Unemployed	.	.	4.5	2.1	5.9	4.0	4.0	1.7
Homemakers [1]	.	.	45.1	56.7	45.1	58.8	45.1	56.2
Students [2]	.	.	1.1	0.3	2.6	0.9	0.6	0.2
Disabled and others	.	.	2.5	3.5	2.0	2.2	2.9	3.8

[1] Persons wholly engaged in unpaid household duties. [2] Includes persons undergoing vocational training.

respectively. Unemployment was highest among the educated group of local-born foreigners living in the towns, and lowest among the immigrants born abroad and working in rural areas (see table 3).

A substantial number of the foreign males (45 per cent) were working either as wage or salary earners, in contrast with the indigenous males who were often employers or self-employed (see table 4). The situation is reversed for the foreign females, nearly three-quarters of whom were in the self-employed category. About a fifth of the female group were family workers. The foreign workers were employed mainly in the private sector, a few in the public sector, and the rest as family workers, caretakers and apprentices. Significant as evidence of social mobility among the foreign workers born in Ghana is the slightly higher proportion of those working as employees in the public service, as apprentices and as employers, compared with those born abroad.

TABLE 4. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF GHANAIAN AND FOREIGN WORKERS, 1960 (%)

Employment status	Ghanaian workers		Foreign workers					
			All foreigners		Born in Ghana		Born abroad	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Employer	3.3	1.8	0.6	—	1.2	0.2	0.7	—
Self-employed	55.9	74.8	40.3	72.2	41.4	77.0	39.2	70.0
Employees in:								
Public sector	11.4	1.4	10.3	0.5	11.1	0.9	10.6	1.2
Private sector	13.7	2.0	34.7	5.0	23.4	3.7	36.8	5.9
Family workers	11.0	19.0	4.7	20.1	14.6	16.6	3.5	20.6
Caretakers in agriculture [1]	2.0	0.2	7.4	1.5	4.4	0.6	7.6	1.7
Apprentices	2.7	0.8	1.9	0.7	3.9	1.0	1.6	0.7

[1] Persons who look after or manage another person's farm and who receive a share from the proceeds of the farm as payment.

OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Although a high proportion of the foreigners were in the labour force, nevertheless, partly on account of their lack of education, the majority of them were unskilled labourers. Contrary to popular belief before the Census, proportionally fewer foreign workers than Ghanaians were engaged in agriculture; in fact, a significant proportion of foreigners in the rural areas were active as petty traders, cocoa brokers, transport operators and in other service sectors (see table 5). Most of those working in agriculture, however, were in paid employment as day workers and full-time labourers on cocoa and other farms and in forestry and logging, or as sharecropper-caretakers receiving an agreed portion of the proceeds of the harvest of the farms under their care. Relatively speaking, more than twice as many foreign as indigenous female workers were in sales, and the difference was greater still among males (almost five times). Foreign female workers played a major role in the distribution of essential commodities, such as imported clothing, textiles, food items, leather articles, dried fish, etc., in rural areas, an activity not particularly liked by the Ghanaians since it involves much travelling about on foot.

A number of foreigners were also active as craftsmen (e.g. tailors, seamstresses, vulcanisers, plumbers, carpenters and plasterers, fitters, oilers and greasers, watch repairers), longshoremen and freight handlers, etc. Foreign workers also tended to be more concentrated than Ghanaians in the mining and quarrying industries, as labourers, diggers and so on, and in the service sector (police, fire, military). They were least concentrated in the top professions, clerical and managerial positions.

The tendency already noted towards the relative concentration of tribes in specific activities was still evident in the post-independence period. Thus whereas Liberians tended to become craftsmen and service and transport workers, immigrants from the Ivory Coast and Togo tended to be found more in agriculture (although the latter also included building and other skilled craftsmen). Nigerians were particularly noted for their active participation in the diamond industry, either as diggers or dealers; indeed, in this industry approximately half the foreign workers were born in Nigeria and about a third of all workers were of Nigerian origin. Nigerian families also provided many petty traders.

The immigrants did not stay in one place on entering Ghana but moved about in search of better opportunities. In doing so, they also tended to change their occupations. For example, an immigrant who started out in Brong-Ahafo Region as a cocoa farm labourer or caretaker and moved to Kumasi or Accra would change his activity in his new place of residence, and become, say, a watchman, a petty trader or a porter. In general the degree of occupational mobility was related to the skill and education of the individual workers, but since most of them were unskilled illiterates initially, mobility was often horizontal rather than vertical. Nevertheless, some often increased their incomes considerably, especially when they took up trading in the towns. Occupational mobility was much greater among the local-born foreign workers; these tended to be more skilled, and were relatively more numerous in professional and clerical activities than workers born abroad. Even in agriculture, more local-born foreign workers managed farms or ran their own (76.2 per cent of all those engaged in this sector as against 58.9 per cent), and fewer worked as labourers for local farm owners than did those born abroad (21.9 per cent as against 37.4 per cent). This is a clear sign of the improved economic status of the former group.

Although on the whole foreign workers had made few inroads into the skilled and topmost professional sectors in 1960, they were contributing significantly to some of the most important economic branches, especially the cocoa industry which produced nearly 70 per cent of Ghana's foreign exchange earnings. Nearly a quarter of the total foreign male labour force and about half of the foreign agricultural labour force was employed in this industry alone.

A study of 157 aliens employed in established service enterprises in 1970 —admittedly a very small sample—shows that most of them were waiters, stewards, storekeepers and housekeepers, cleaners, laundrymen, cooks, barmen, kitchen attendants, messengers, watchmen and labourers. There were only two clerks, one receptionist, two painters, two masons, two tailors and two carpenters. About a quarter of the group had received middle school education; over two-thirds had never been to school, whilst the rest had received some vocational and other training. Not much upward mobility had occurred in the group after an average of ten years' service in

TABLE 5. OCCUPATIONS OF GHANAIAN AND FOREIGN WORKERS, 1960

(%)

Occupation	Sex	Ghanaian workers			Foreign workers				
					All foreigners			Born in Ghana [2]	Born abroad [2]
		Whole country	Urban [1]	Rural [1]	Whole country	Urban	Rural		
Professional and technical	M	3.4	4.9	1.8	1.5	2.5	1.0	2.3	1.4
	F	1.3			0.3	0.7	0.2	0.6	0.3
Administrative, executive and managerial	M	0.9	1.7	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.3
	F	—			—	—	—	—	—
Clerical	M	3.0	6.4	0.6	0.8	1.9	0.3	1.5	0.7
	F	0.3			0.1	0.3	—	0.2	0.1
Sales	M	2.6	26.9	8.2	11.7	19.8	7.7	8.9	12.0
	F	25.9			56.1	79.3	42.5	61.8	54.7
Farming and fishing	M	65.9	20.9	75.6	49.0	9.6	68.3	51.7	48.7
	F	60.6			28.6	2.2	43.9	20.6	30.4
Mining and quarrying	M	1.3	1.5	0.6	5.5	4.3	6.1	2.0	5.9
	F	0.1			0.9	0.5	1.1	0.3	1.1
Transport	M	3.5	5.6	1.2	2.1	4.4	0.9	5.8	1.6
	F	0.1			—	0.1	—	—	0.1
Crafts	M	17.6	27.5	11.0	23.5	43.8	13.6	24.5	23.3
	F	10.3			10.0	9.4	10.4	12.3	9.4
Services	M	1.8	4.6	0.8	5.6	13.2	1.9	3.0	6.1
	F	1.4			4.0	7.5	1.9	4.2	3.9

[1] Both sexes. [2] Whole country.

these enterprises; for example, on the adoption of the Aliens Compliance Order, when most of them resigned from these establishments, only one of the 16 stewards had been promoted to chief steward and two to senior steward (however, seven of the 48 waiters had become head waiters).

The above picture of the social and economic characteristics of foreign African workers in Ghana probably remained substantially unchanged up to the adoption of the Aliens Compliance Order in November 1969, since although, as stated, some upward mobility had become apparent at the time of the 1960 Census, not only were the changes observed very slow, but in any event the economy was not growing fast enough to render such mobility possible for the majority of the population. Certain cultural and other factors may also have hindered the occupational advancement of foreign workers, who seem to have kept themselves too much to themselves, and to have interacted very little, socially speaking, with the local host communities, any such contacts being confined purely to economic transactions.

REMUNERATION AND TURNOVER

There are no intrinsic differences between the wages and salaries earned by foreign and indigenous workers for the same kind of work. All workers have seen their nominal earnings increase in recent years, but real earnings are another story. Over the period 1960-68, for example, the value of the minimum wage for unskilled workers declined in real terms by 35 per cent, and the indications are that it had fallen still further by 1972. A study of agricultural wages between 1957/59 and 1966/69 shows that the real wages of "annual" labourers (hired by contract for a year or six months, especially on the cocoa farms) and of casual labourers (also widely employed by farmers throughout the country)[1] fell by 24 and 26 per cent respectively during this period.[2]

It is not so easy to estimate the annual or daily earnings of the foreign self-employed workers, since their activities are so varied as to preclude adequate statistical coverage. But it can be assumed that, as in the population at large, the distribution of income and wealth among these foreign workers is most uneven. For example, cattle dealers, transport operators and large traders certainly earn much more than persons in manual and other petty jobs.[3]

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[1] See B. E. Rourke and S. K. Sakyi-Gyinae: "Agricultural and urban wage rates in Ghana", in *Economic Bulletin of Ghana* (Accra), Second Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1972, pp. 3-13.

[2] N. O. Addo: "Employment and labour supply on Ghana's cocoa farms in the pre- and post-Aliens Compliance Order era", ibid., Vol. 2, No. 4, 1972. For further details of wage and cost-of-living trends see K. Ewusi: *The distribution of monetary incomes in Ghana*, ISSER Technical Publication Series, No. 14 (Legon, University of Ghana, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, 1971).

[3] In this connection, and for a recent study of the monthly earnings of different categories of self-employed workers, see C. Greenhalgh: "Income differentials in the Eastern Region of Ghana", in *Economic Bulletin of Ghana*, Second Series, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1972, pp. 3-14.

In considering the earnings of foreign workers it is important to bear in mind that, as among the Ghanaian population, the lower-paid wage earners and less prosperous self-employed often have a secondary job to augment their basic remuneration. Their wives, too, are usually active petty traders and often make a significant contribution to the household income.

One problem bound up with the employment of foreign workers in some establishments is their high turnover rate. Many of these workers come to Ghana with the object of earning a cash sum, after which they return to their home country. The high turnover rate is reportedly a major problem for the mine authorities, and decades of incentive schemes designed to reward long service have not brought any marked changes in the workers' behaviour. In the Obuasi gold mines, for example, the management has introduced all kinds of ingenious incentives to persuade workers to remain for five years in order to qualify for gratuity, possible promotion and other benefits, yet a 1967 study found that only one-eighth of the workers from Upper Volta, Niger and, incidentally, the Northern Region of Ghana itself stayed this long.[1]

On the other hand, foreign workers in public employment—where conditions of service are more secure and a pension is often provided upon retirement—and even the majority of the full-time labourers and particularly the caretakers on the cocoa farms, have long service records.

HOUSING

Housing constitutes a social and economic problem throughout the country, particularly in the towns, and one which affects immigrants in particular. From time immemorial, immigrant tribes have tended to live in separate quarters (*zongos*, i.e. strangers' quarters) at some distance from villages and towns. These *zongos* often consist of very poor dwellings built of mud with thatched roofs; immigrants are rarely found living in decent houses. The *zongos* are regarded as temporary abodes, and their occupants hesitate to make any permanent investment in terms of durable buildings or property, since as a transient group they generally expect to return home at some future date.

In colonial times some migrant workers were housed rent-free by their employers (e.g. mines, government departments, cocoa farm owners) but others lived communally in sheds and hangars, being driven to do so partly by the high rents in the towns and partly to simplify catering, since most of them were unmarried males.

The 1960 post-enumeration survey found differences in housing amenities among various socio-economic groups, and also among the

[1] E. Ampene: "Obuasi and its mines", in *Ghana Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1967. The money saved by these workers is sometimes used towards marriage or for investment in a new self-employed activity, e.g. in trade or transport, which is more remunerative than work in the mines.

migrant population as a whole. It was observed that while both the internal migrants and the immigrants had similar amenities in their homes, the most important factor determining the quality of the amenities was the status of the household as measured by the educational level and occupation of its head. The African immigrants, who occupied a low socio-economic status in the community, were among the groups with the poorest housing conditions (e.g. only 20.6 per cent of homes had electric light, 12.8 per cent had running water and 18.3 per cent had their own kitchen, as against an average of some 30 per cent, 18 per cent and 26 per cent respectively for internal migrants) and the highest average number of persons per room (1-2.9 persons in 53.4 per cent of homes, 3-4.9 persons in 29.4 per cent, and 5 or more persons in 15.4 per cent).

HEALTH PROBLEMS

In the country as a whole, health problems are among those of greatest concern to the Government. The rural areas, where the bulk of the foreign population lives and works, badly lack modern health facilities, and death rates are relatively high (about 15-18 per thousand, as compared with about 11-14 per thousand in the towns). Long-distance immigration inevitably involves certain travel hazards, as well as a distinct risk of transmission of infectious diseases. Again, many unskilled African immigrants are employed in work or environments (mines, public works, etc.) in which they are exposed to certain health and accident hazards.

A particular problem in the case of non-Ghanaian Africans is their inability to take full advantage of the available health facilities; when these are not provided free, they simply cannot afford the cost of medical care, and consequently resort to traditional methods of healing, just as the poorer members of the indigenous population do. Thus traditional practices, inadequate financial means, superstition and lack of education, no less than the absence of adequate health facilities on the spot, all prevent these workers from making maximum use of the modern health services. People living in towns obviously have greater access to such services than do those in rural areas; in addition, most of the serious diseases, like river blindness (onchocerciasis), sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis), etc., which are prevalent in the rural areas, do not affect the town dwellers. This would seem to confer an advantage on the foreign workers, proportionally more of whom than of the Ghanaian population are urban residents; but the fact that, as we have just seen, their standards of accommodation (in the towns as in the countryside) are appallingly low, places them in a particularly unenviable situation as far as health and hygiene are concerned. All these considerations suggest, even in the absence of statistics to support them, that the mortality and health of foreign African workers are among the poorest in the entire community.

* * *

I now return to consider how various aspects of the situation described above have been affected by the enforcement of the legislation relating to aliens.

Effects of the Aliens Compliance Order, 1969

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

In the first place, the Order led to the departure of a very large number of aliens (estimated variously at between 500,000 and 1,000,000), who presumably returned to their home countries. Some estimates had evaluated the foreign-origin population before the Order at over 1.2 million persons, whereas, as already indicated, the 1970 Population Census showed this population to be 562,000 (in fact, this may have been an understatement, as some aliens may have claimed to be Ghanaians).

Systematic studies [1] made by the author in 1970 of the effects of the Order in certain sectors of the economy have yielded many interesting results. In one study concentrating on cocoa farms, estimates based on the sample of farm owners interviewed suggest that about 290,000 persons (217,000 Ghanaians and 72,000 aliens) were employed on Co-operative Society farmers' cocoa farms at the time of the survey, compared with 308,000 (163,000 Ghanaians and 145,000 aliens) just prior to the Order. Thus from 47 per cent before the Order, the foreign workers' share of total employment on the farms had declined to 25 per cent. In the same period the average number of permanent foreign employees (full-time labourers and caretakers) per farmer declined from 0.93 to 0.51, while in contrast the Ghanaian labour component on the farms increased from 53 per cent to 75 per cent and the number of Ghanaian employees per farmer from 1.03 to 1.37.[2]

The departure of the foreign farm workers led to a serious labour shortage. Whereas about 84,000 aliens had left the farms, only some two-thirds of the vacancies had been filled when the survey was carried out nine or ten months later. The exodus affected small farms more than large ones. Moreover, an important finding of the survey was that the farms appear to have been understaffed even before the Order came into force, although it certainly made the situation worse (farms were able to secure only about 67 per cent of the labour they required at the time of the survey, in contrast to 70 per cent prior to the Order).

[1] See, for example, N. O. Addo: *Migration and economic growth in Ghana, with special reference to the social, demographic and economic effects of the Aliens Compliance Order on the society and economy of Ghana* (study undertaken in 1970 with the support of the Population Council, New York).

[2] Idem: "Employment and labour supply on Ghana's cocoa farms in the pre- and post-Aliens Compliance Order era", op. cit.

The Order also had adverse effects on the wage and other costs of cocoa farmers. Wage rates for annual and casual (day) labourers increased by 17 per cent and 16 per cent respectively almost immediately after it came into force, but this was not the only change the new situation brought about. For example, according to the farmers, the casual labourers charged more for doing fewer hours of work than before the Order, the rate reportedly increasing in certain areas from about 55 pesewas for eight to ten hours to about 60 pesewas for only six to seven hours, and labourers demanded cash advances before setting off for the farm, which they had not previously done. Moreover the farmers reported that some of the labourers, particularly the newcomers, performed less efficiently than the more experienced aliens who had departed.

The exemption order already referred to came too late to prevent the above changes, since according to estimates made in the main cocoa-producing area, Brong-Ahafo Region, about 72 per cent of the foreign farm workers had already left before it was issued.

The Aliens Compliance Order also affected other areas of the economy in which foreigners were concentrated. For example, a virtual slump occurred in village house-building in which some foreign craftsmen, such as the Atakpames from Togo, had become specialists. It was also generally observed soon after the Order that the prices of certain goods predominantly sold by aliens, such as meat, and the cost of certain services previously performed by them, such as vulcanising and the sale of certain second-hand goods, went up considerably because of the sudden shortages which occurred, and also because those Ghanaians who moved in immediately took advantage of the market situation to inflate prices. However, the exodus of the aliens may have indirectly induced a change of attitude on the part of some Ghanaians who began to take an interest in certain types of work which they had traditionally regarded as inferior and beneath their dignity.

Whether or not the Order led to any fall in the crime rate is difficult to assess, since the criminal records are not only hard to obtain and incomplete, but also largely unreliable. In particular, since not only aliens but also Ghanaians had been associated with large-scale smuggling of diamonds and other goods, the departure of the former may not have had any significant influence on this kind of illegal activity.

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

The external political repercussions of the Order were undoubtedly quite disastrous. Relations between Ghana and most of the countries from which the immigrants had come, particularly Togo and Nigeria, became highly strained and it is known that a further deterioration in the situation was averted only thanks to the intense diplomatic activity displayed on the Ghanaian side. Ghana was accused of blackmailing the aliens, who had contributed enormously to its economic develop-

ment for over a century. It was not until the installation of the second military régime on 13 January 1972 that Ghana's relations with her neighbours began to show some improvement.

III. The future outlook for immigration policies in West Africa

Recent trends in immigration policies in many African countries lead almost inevitably to the conclusion that, in future, international migration within the region is likely to become increasingly subjected to regulation, the extent to which immigrants will be admitted into a country being dictated to a large extent by the economic as well as the political interests of the receiving country.

Caldwell has observed that in most Commonwealth African countries

> ... the oldest type of population policy has been that relating to the regulation of migration. Such regulation has had to be considered more in recent years, because many of what are now international borders were little more than internal boundaries in the extensive British and French Empires. Furthermore, independent governments are much more likely to feel a prior responsibility for securing employment for their own nationals than is a colonial government.[1]

Caldwell's statement epitomises the present position of a number of countries in West Africa, such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, Dahomey and to a lesser extent Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. Countries which have come out with any clear official policies designed to regulate and even restrict immigration are almost all immigrant-receiving ones. Recent political, social and economic developments in these countries have, however, made them review their positions in respect of international migration. The case of Ghana has been examined here, but Ghana is not alone in having adopted drastic policies on immigration (even though its action in expelling foreign workers may well have influenced a chain reaction of similar measures elsewhere).

Some Ghanaians were expelled from Sierra Leone in 1968 because they allegedly excluded Sierra Leoneans from fishing, did not pay taxes, made beaches unsightly and unhygienic with their settlements and in so doing damaged tourist prospects, and would represent a security problem in the event of attempts to infiltrate Sierra Leone from the sea. The Ivory Coast expelled over 1,000 Dahomeans and Togolese from the country in 1958 on the grounds that they had occupied privileged positions—as doctors, teachers, clerks, etc.—for far too long, and that they should give way to local people, Nigeria has recently adopted various measures which, although not forming a cohesive or

[1] J. C. Caldwell: "Population policy: a survey of Commonwealth Africa", in J. C. Caldwell and C. Okonjo (eds.): *The population of tropical Africa* (London, Longmans, 1968), p. 370.

officially acknowledged immigration policy, nevertheless place restrictions in the way of aliens seeking to enter the country for certain types of work. Expulsions of foreigners have also taken place recently in Zaire, Uganda and elsewhere.

The current trend of immigration policies in the region suggests that, while the future may be obscure, the *laissez-faire* attitude towards immigration belongs to the past. From Ghana's example, *West Africa* magazine draws the following conclusion:

> The trend is clear. To a greater or lesser degree, it is the ambition of each of the governments of the entirely artificial but now rigidly entrenched units into which West Africa is divided to reserve the right to live and work within its country for those who can pass a restrictive citizenship test. The object of turning this great and potentially rich area into a zone of free trade and free movement seems more remote than ever.[1]

Professor Mabogunje also has this to say:

> Pan-Africanism appears everywhere to be on the retreat. It is being replaced by economic chauvinism which sees the contribution of the migrants resulting not from their special circumstances but from a usurpation of the rights and privileges of members of the host community. Restriction rather than competition is now the battle cry. Instead of positive programmes to strengthen the competitive effectiveness of indigenes or nationals vis-à-vis the immigrants, most governments are too tempted by the short-term political advantage of sacrificing the interests of the immigrants on the altar of national cohesion.[2]

However, these " positive programmes " are hard to design and implement in West African countries, where the desire to develop is being felt more and more keenly and tensions are continuously being created between communities. People throughout these communities feel that they cannot wait any longer; governments are accordingly under constant pressure to find solutions to internal problems. The immigration question is increasingly becoming a political one. At a recent seminar in Dakar on " Modern Migrations in West Africa ", the meeting concluded that the immigration problem in this region could largely be solved by the governments themselves coming together to form an economic community. Until this is done, the admission of immigrants into one country or the other may become even more restricted.

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[1] *West Africa* (London), No. 2775, 15 Aug. 1970.

[2] A. L. Mabogunje: *Regional mobility and resource development in West Africa*, 6th Keith Callard Lectures, Centre for Developing-Area Studies, McGill University (Montreal and London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), pp. 12-13.