

## Notes and News

### *Migrations from French Territories into Ghana—Field Studies by Dr. Jean Rouch*

DR. JEAN ROUCH'S study of migrations into Ghana from French territories to the north has been published by the Société des Africanistes in their journal (tome xxvi, fascicules i et ii, 1956), and also as a separate section, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)' which can be obtained from the Société at the Musée de l'Homme, Place du Trocadéro, Paris XVI<sup>e</sup>, price 1,200 francs.

The following translated abridgement from his monograph of Dr. Rouch's findings is published with his permission.

'The work was started in 1950-1 and a second tour was carried out from March to December 1954, the object of both tours being to study the routes of the migrants, the duration and place of their stay, their economy, relations between themselves and with the inhabitants of the Gold Coast (Ghana), their mentality, religious and political life. An effort was made to include all migrants coming from French African territories [lying to the North], though a more specialized acquaintance with the Songhai and Zerema made for a closer study of these tribes.

'Three main methods were employed: direct conversations with the migrants at their places of work or in their homes; general meetings and establishment of contact with scattered groups (miners, labourers, dockers, traders, &c.) of French nationality; and systematic questionnaires, individual and collective, in the Accra region. Collective questionnaires produced the best results, though general meetings elicited complaints and demands which migrants would not have dared to formulate outside the ceremony of the meeting, and individual conversations produced some valuable confirmation of facts and increased the depth of the inquiry.

'The study cannot, of course, claim to be exhaustive and attention needs to be given to the Moshi, Malinke, Peul, and Kotokoli communities, on whom work has only just started. Nor can the migrants from the Northern Territories of Ghana and from [Northern] British Nigeria be separated from those from the French territories. Migrants from Togo, Dahomey, or the lower Ivory Coast, from Liberia, or from the coast of British Nigeria, have remained outside the scope of the inquiry because they are clearly separated from the peoples of the North; their way of life and beliefs bring them much closer to the native peoples of Ghana, but their number and importance demand a special study. . . .

'It was the slave trade which first opened up the routes of the North to other forms of commerce, and it is likely that the Wangara, who played an important part in the history of Ashanti, were the first traders to come from the North. The Hausa probably came next, and early nineteenth-century accounts are extant of the enormous caravans which used to leave for Kumasi, already established as an important market in 1820. Later, when Europeans settled in West Africa, the old slave routes naturally became the new trade routes, and the Hausa, who were by now importing merchandise from the coast towns of the South, had the monopoly of trade in the whole of the Northern Territories until 1930. . . .

'The coming of the railway to the Gold Coast in 1902 resulted in a flood of European trade goods and greater demands for labour. From 1870 to 1910, manual labourers were rare on the coast because the people of the coast emigrated to the neighbouring colonies (the Oil Rivers of Southern Nigeria, the Cameroons, and the Congo). The Gold Coast was forced to import manual labour from the Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, so that it

welcomed the first bands of migrants from the North. Labour was needed on the railway, in public works, in the gold mines, and, after 1880, in the cocoa industry. . . .

'The first Zerma to leave for the Gold Coast were evidently those from the region of Dosso, and between 1903 and 1910 parties from Niamey, Dargol, and the Goruol, Ayorou, and Zermaganda followed. The journey was looked upon as an adventure, for although the routes were open they were not safe. Migrants armed themselves with lances, clubs, bows and arrows, and generally took a few animals, tobacco, and salt to sell in order to buy food on the way. Their itinerary was that of the old slave routes and the journey took a month and a half. . . .

'The nineteen-twenties saw the real economic development of the Gold Coast, with new roads throughout the country, the opening of the Accra-Kumasi railway in 1923, and the completion of the port of Takoradi in 1928. The migratory movement intensified on parallel lines: in 1921 the census returns showed 50,000 migrants, of whom 12,000 were from French territory; in 1931 the census gave nearly 300,000 migrants, of whom 200,000 came from French territory. . . .

'The period after the Second World War, marked by the reopening of the frontiers, brought with it a new rush of migrants to the Gold Coast. The general development of road transport decreased the risks of the earlier journeys, but there remained for the migrants the daily struggle in the towns or the mines, the lure of the unknown, the myth of Eldorado, and the fame of the market of Kumasi and the shops of Accra. In order to get married in Niger territory or in the Sudan, a young man continues to demonstrate his courage and skill by bringing back from the Gold Coast the cloths and prints for the dowry. . . .

'For several centuries the Gold Coast has drawn populations to it, and traders, warriors, and adventurers in ever-increasing numbers have taken the road to the south. Over the past fifty years, however, the migrant has become seasonal, mobile, and specialized. Today, 300,000 to 400,000 French migrants from the North are employed in the Gold Coast, 200,000 as manual labourers, 120,000 as agricultural workers, and 60,000 as traders. This wave of migrants represents 40% of the manual labour force and 16% of the traders in the country. For French West Africa it brings back each year a sum of about £6,000,000 (say, three milliards of CFA francs) into very poor territories. These migrants are organized into small regional communities in their dwelling-places and in their work, having their own chiefships, councils of notables, and religious societies. They take an active part in political life while retaining their own liberty and independence.

'The typical migrant, the Zabrama or Gao, travels without his wife and passes seven or eight months in Ghana, in small village communities, having the monopoly of certain employments. He returns each year to the Niger to farm, taking back there, on an average, £60 in money or merchandise. As soon as the harvest is gathered in he leaves again for a further stay. His village on the Niger thus has its counterpart in Ghana and his life may be compared with that of a colonial carrying out a series of tours and leaves, but without abandoning his social or religious milieu. Moreover, his migrant life revives his traditions, reinforces his pride of race, and gives a new lease of life to his beliefs. When he has solved his transport problems, the evolution will be complete: the Zabrama, thanks to the qualities of his proud and intelligent tribe, will have achieved successfully the feat of living at the same time in Ghana and on the Niger, and of playing an essential part in both places.

'The importance of the migrations lies as much in their numbers as in their labour potential and economic value (the annual export of the migrants is equivalent to half the annual production of gold in Ghana and to a tenth of the annual imports of French West Africa). The adaptability of the migrants, resulting in 'supertribalization', undoubtedly an essential social and religious feature of the movement, runs contrary to the usual

conclusions of sociological studies on 'changing societies'. It may be asked whether it is peculiar to the Gold Coast or has escaped the notice of other investigators. The organization of the migrants has developed considerably during the last fifty years; they have learned to band together, and to make for themselves a position of increasing importance in the brisk competitive life of Ghana. Thanks to the solidarity of the regional communities, successes grow in number and undertakings with an entirely African spirit, formation, and leadership are established.

'A large number of factors drives these men to Ghana. The traditional routes of the slave trade led the first Wangara, Hausa, and Moshi towards Salaga and Kumasi, and today the journey has become the ordeal of courageous young men. Even now, when the dangers of the journey are restricted, its prestige has remained intact. To go into Ghana has become a tradition and all men of the western Niger claim to have been there at least once. The native countries of the migrants are extremely poor. Work in the fields occupies the men for only three or four months in the year; no industry or mine calls for labourers, and the small local enterprises have no trouble in finding the few workers they need. In contrast, it is easy to find employment in Ghana; money is easily earned and the least qualified migrant finds no difficulty in earning the tax for his whole family there. Then, too, the abundance, quality, and cheapness of textiles and manufactured goods have made Accra and Kumasi the greatest bazaars in all West Africa. Many of these goods are made by the British specially for the Africans and the selling prices are almost half those obtaining in the neighbouring French Colonies.

'Another attraction is the freedom to take up or leave employment at will, which makes the migrant a responsible person, since his savings depend only on his work, which may enable him to attain an important position, such as contractor, transport operator, small manufacturer, &c. Apart from forced labour which, before 1946, caused many departures, other grievances against French administration, such as heavy taxation, conscription, and the 'feudal' authority of some officials and chiefs, are given as a primary cause of migration. The majority of men from the North consider that all work apart from that of cultivating the land is shameful to men who are not of servile race; a free man ought not to work in front of the women of his country. The migrant, by expatriating himself, can thus work without shame as he does not take his wife with him. He chooses Ghana in preference to the Ivory Coast because he knows that no one in his village will know what he has done. Finally, upsets and quarrels are often responsible for departures; a betrayed husband, an angered friend, a freed prisoner, leave for Ghana; on their return they are new men.

'All these reasons are interconnected, but nowadays custom is the predominating factor.

'It is impossible to halt a movement of this kind; the closing of the frontiers in 1941-3, far from curbing it, encouraged migration still more, and it is foreseeable that any other similar attempt would have the same result. Ghana has become the second country of these peoples of the eastern Sudan, of the Upper Volta, and of the western Niger. They have been successful there, so how can one prevent their friends or their children from following their example? Moreover, the migrations are by no means unfavourable to Ghana, to French West Africa, and to Africa as a whole. Ghana depends very largely on this wave of migrants, and, in spite of the conclusions of other observers, it is likely that for many years to come the country will remain dependent on this migratory manual labour. The disadvantage is that this labour is seasonal and shifting, but no attempt to stabilize it could succeed; it is by adjusting themselves to these tendencies that firms will be able to keep hold of their labour. This is perhaps contrary to the normal system, but the success of the small undertakings of the migrants shows that it is workable. French Africa seems at first glance to lose manpower in these migrations; but, in fact, the migrant exports his labour and imports in return money and goods. It is thanks to him that in 1953-4 the people of the Niger did not die of hunger,

that the majority of taxes are paid, that the markets in the bush are stocked with goods and clothing. The only drawback would seem to be the too prolonged absence of the Moshi migrants which is prejudicial to good farming in the Upper Volta. One of the remedies for this evil would be the relaxation of customs control which should not be an obstacle to the return of the Moshi labourers (the transfer of this labour to the Ivory Coast is not necessary because that country does not suffer from a shortage of workers; and the fear of the propagation of subversive political ideas seems to be unjustified at present). It seems therefore, that the French territories profit greatly from the migrations. They could profit even more by relaxing the customs duties, permitting international transportation, and facilitating transfer of money by post or through the banks. If this were done, migrants would return home more frequently and the repatriation of their funds would not represent a complete loss of currency. To control these journeys, a travel certificate would be indispensable and is indeed demanded by the migrants themselves.

'The effect of these migrations on Africa in general can be seen in the breaking down of the old barriers of warlike rivalries, especially between the forest and coast lands. The thousands of men who go down to the South each year and then return to the North may one day bring about a closer understanding between the Africa of the coast and that of the savannahs. The migrants themselves, Wangara, Gao, and Zabrama, may also bring into this Europeanized country something of the true African culture and ancient wisdom of old Ghana, Mali, or Songhay. Certainly this entirely new African élite, which has evolved in the course of these migrations, will play an essential role in the Africa of tomorrow.'

Dr. Rouch also reports that preparatory work for further research on the migrants into Ghana in 1958 has been carried out. The projected research includes studies sponsored and financed by the Ghana Government at the Bamboi and Yeji ferries, giving access to southern Ghana from the North, by a team which will include French African interpreters and will work for a period of a year. It is also hoped to secure funds for a similar investigation at the eastern entries across the lower Volta at Senchi bridge and Tefi ferry.

Meanwhile a team under Dr. Rouch's direction has also been investigating migration in the Ivory Coast. These studies, carried out from November 1956 to June 1957, have included inquiries into factors affecting the stabilization of migrants in the Abidjan area, at Abengourou in Agni country, and at Gagnoa in Bete country. A pilot study on the character and intensity of migration has also been carried out at Buake in Baule country, Buake being a centre of concentration and dispersal of migrants coming from the North to seek employment in various parts of the Ivory Coast. This pilot study was carried out in November-January 1956-7 and will afford a basis for a more prolonged sample survey at Buake. Further projected studies in the Ivory Coast include an investigation of cattle trading, for which Buake is an important transit point, and an intensive study of selected migrant groups in the Ivory Coast.

### *Soviet Africanists' Co-ordinating Conference*

THE following is a translation of extracts from a report by R. N. Ismagilova and L. D. Yablochkov in *Sovietskaia Etnografia*, 1957, No. 3, of a conference which took place on 26 February 1957 at the Ethnographic Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. devoted to the co-ordination of research work on Africa in the various Institutes of the Academy. Members of the Institutes of Ethnography, Oriental Studies, Geography, World Economics, and International Affairs took part in the discussions; as well as Africanists from Moscow and Leningrad, scholars of other faculties and research institutions were present:

In a short introduction I. I. Potekhin (Institute of Ethnography) stressed the importance