

PART IV

MIGRATION AND THE FAMILY

Spatial mobility is admittedly one of the most far reaching external factors affecting family change in Africa, a process which is dealt with in the final four chapters utilizing data from Nigeria, Togo and Ghana. Dr Aderanti Adepoju investigates the impact of migration on rural and urban family patterns and relationships in Oshogbo and Ife. Dr Ahianyo Akakpo is concerned with the effects of migration on the Togolese village family. His results suggest that migration may often lead to conservatism rather than change in the rural family. Dr Hauser discusses the opinions of Togolese industrial workmen in a phosphate mine regarding various marriage customs, including polygyny, bride-wealth payments, choice of wife and inter-ethnic marriage. Finally Mrs Nana Apt discusses some findings regarding the plight of the aged in the rapidly changing social situation of contemporary Ghana. She ends by stressing the need for more intensive research on the subject.

CHAPTER 10

SOME ASPECTS OF MIGRATION AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Introduction:

During the last two decades the Nigerian economy has expanded considerably in production, income and employment. (Aluko, 1972:1-2) This development has been marked by a rapid commercial, manufacturing and urban growth. (Green 1971, 1-3) The Western Region was in the fore-front in such growth, especially as regards urbanization. Most of the benefits resulting from the development have, however, gravitated to the few urban centres. There are located the basic socio-economic infrastructure—electricity, health and educational facilities, pipe-borne water, good roads. The rural country-side are regarded as feeders for the urban dwellers. The wealth generated by the agricultural sector tends to gravitate from rural to urban centres. This imbalance in investment between the rural and the urban centres gave rise to an ever-widening disparity in development between the two zones. The end-product has been an increased tempo of city-ward drift of the rural population, in what they see as a rational socio-psychological or economic decision. The migrants—illiterate, half or ill-educated, predominantly young folks—are in search of fortunes in administration, commerce, industry or the professions. They want to enjoy the modern amenities and good things of life in the town. All these, no doubt, give rise to a multitude of—often complex—problems: rural depopulation at the source and urban congestion and rising unemployment at the (urban) destination. One of the institutions that has been drastically affected by such population movements and the associated problems is the family.¹

This paper investigates the impact of migration on rural and urban family pattern and relationships. In other words, it attempts to spotlight how migration has transformed the traditional Yoruba family in the face of challenges of increasing urbanization, and examines the social and economic relationship between the rural and urban family.

Source of Data and Selected Characteristic of the Survey Population:

This study draws some materials from a rural-urban migration survey conducted by the author in Oshogbo and Ife between October 1971 and January 1972. A random sample (using an areal, stratified design) size of about 920 and 650 households in Ife and Oshogbo respectively were interviewed. Information was obtained on migration profile, pattern of family residence, rural-urban socio-economic links and attitude to town and village life, apart from the usual socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the survey population.

Oshogbo and Ife are two occupationally contrasting, traditional Yoruba towns in South Western Nigeria, 30 miles apart; Oshogbo—an administrative, commercial centre and Ife an agriculture-based (recently) University town.

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Of the total 1558 households surveyed (Oshogbo: 645, Ife: 913) with a total population of 5,283 persons, 34.3 per cent in Oshogbo and 44.3 per cent in Ife are non-migrants. About 31 per cent in Oshogbo and 7 per cent in Ife are intra-divisional migrants. Inter-divisional migrants formed 25 per cent in Oshogbo and 42 per cent in Ife. Inter-state migrants—predominantly non-Yoruba in Oshogbo and Ife are of the order 10 per cent and 7 per cent respectively.

Both towns are traditional, and are predominantly populated by the Yoruba. In spite of the fact that our survey was confined to the “migrant” and “mixed” zones, 89 per cent of the survey population are Yoruba in Oshogbo; 93 per cent in Ife.⁴ The Ibo components formed 4.5 per cent and 0.5 per cent in Oshogbo and Ife respectively. The Hausa constituted 3.2 per cent and 5.5 per cent of the survey population in Oshogbo and Ife respectively.

From the foregoing, it can safely be inferred that a lot of population movement has taken place into these towns. More importantly, most of the migrants are Yoruba. These two towns therefore serve as a good laboratory for a study of the phenomenon of migration and the family among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria.

Yoruba Rural and Urban Family Patterns:

All societies have institutional incentives for marriage, procreation and child care.⁵ The traditional Yoruba society is very insistent on marriage—the threshold to family formation. Marriage is therefore near universal and comes early in life, much earlier for the female than the male. (Adepoju, 1969:3-5) The proportion of men and women remaining permanently single among the rural Yoruba is negligible. By age 25, for instance, almost all rural women—94 per cent—are already married. (Adepoju, 1968:5) Data from six Yoruba survey villages showed that marriage is early, fertility is high, standards of living extremely poor. (Olusanya, 1969)

The economy of the region is agrarian: agriculture is the major occupation of the people. Trading, also an important economic activity in rural areas, is almost exclusively a female occupation. Only a few men are engaged in non-agricultural and non-trading activities. (ibid p. 33) Craft is a specialized, long-standing occupation based on lineage and sex.

Traditionally, the members of a Yoruba family—whether in polygynous or monogamous unions—are found under one roof. The family is an economic unit—the basis of production and consumption. The family members are the main source of labour on the farm. The women are expected to contribute services and goods to the maintenance of the home. (Aluko, 1965:54) Women engage in farming activities—especially planting, harvesting and sale of the farm produce. They also, on a part-time basis, engage in petty retail trade with small initial capital coming from the husband. Others are involved in traditional crafts—weaving, spinning, dyeing, pottery, which until recently, have been the monopoly of the women. These traditional occupations, no doubt, with varying degrees of hidden underemployment, provide extra, though meagre, sources of income for the family (Lucas, 1971:4).

In such traditional rural society, high fertility is highly valued. To the Yoruba people in the rural areas, it still seems a blessing to have a quiverful of progeny (Galetti *et al*, 1956:74). Wives provide household and farm help. They become an asset as long as they contribute much more to the family income (on the farm) than the value of their upkeep. Children are economically valuable in so far as they share in the work burden or serve a long period of apprenticeship in their father's occupation. Children add to parental prestige, strengthen marital bonds and provide security for parents in old age and during illness. (Adepoju, 1969:3)

For the Yoruba in the villages, the larger the family, the better. Galletti and his colleagues in their survey of cocoa farmers in the Yoruba society remarked: "In the smaller families the rise in income is very modest. But in larger families, the increase is much more marked: for these there are more children gainfully occupied they can operate larger farm holdings." (1954:79)

The socio-economic environment of the village dwellers is however not ideal. Housing is poor. Returns to labour on the farm are not commensurate with the efforts expended. Basic social facilities in good water and medical facilities are lacking. The isolated life in the village, drab physical environment and lack of recreational activities, among other things, act as "push" factors to the rural population. (Olusanya, 1969:35-6).

The consequence is mass movement of the village people to the urban centres. This trend immediately disrupts the composition and the role of the economic unit—the family.

The fact that the Yoruba are predominantly town-dwellers—probably the most urbanized in tropical Africa—has been sufficiently documented. (e.g. Bascom, 1962). Fadipe (1970:151) even held that in pre-colonial days, every Yoruba was a town-dweller. In 1952, about 52 per cent of the total population of Western Nigeria were living in communities with 5,000 or more people about 43 per cent in centres with 10,000 people. By 1963, about 62 per cent lived in places with 10,000 inhabitants or more.⁶ The major factor in such rapid growth is obviously in-migration from the rural areas.⁷ Urbanization among the Yoruba is indigenous and predates colonial administration. (Mitchel, 1961:279 & Bascom, 1955:453). This is a striking feature of traditional Yoruba towns. It is also an important factor in discussing migration and Yoruba urban family setting and relationships.

It has been pointed out that under the subsistence rural economy, the family has to depend on the productive efforts of all its members to sustain itself. There are therefore manifest advantages in a large family.

In the urban setting, there is reduced opportunity for child employment. Changes in consumption demand of children and cost of child rearing in the urban environment make large family size an economic burden. The direct and indirect costs of education—the 'free' primary education initiated in 1955 does not make education totally free—are largely born by the parents. With increased educational aspirations the period of dependence of children tends to increase. The apprenticeship system, while equipping the apprentices with professional, technical and vocational skill, tends to postpone the entry of the youth into the labour force. Employment opportunities for non-educated women are severely limited outside trading and crafts.

Unlike the rural areas, therefore, every member of an urban family is a consumer, but not every member is gainfully occupied. The low income earners, the bulk of urban wage earners, find it difficult to support a wife or wives and children in town. The lack of family housing means the migrant has to rent one. The urban consumer survey in Ife, Ilesha and Oshogbo showed that accommodation took about eight per cent and food another five per cent of the wage earners' expenditure in 1963/64.⁹ The picture has changed drastically today. With the opening of the new site of Ife University at Ile-Ife in 1967, for instance, cost of foodstuffs have since trebled. Descent houses are very scarce or when available, the rent is usually prohibitive. The number of persons per household increases with income. Starting with 5.3 persons for income group "750 shillings—949 shillings," it rose to 9.5 for income class "1950 shillings and over" whereas the average was 3.9 persons per household for the low income group, it was 6.6 for the middle income earners.¹⁰

Migration and the Pattern of Residence:

Migration becomes important in the study of the family and family relationship because migration occurs during some phases of the life cycle of the family members. The initial pattern of migration into the urban centres took the form of male migration. Most of these migrants were either young at the time of the move, and therefore unmarried, or if married, they tended to leave their wives (and children, if any) in the village. The first problem a new migrant faces is the question of where to live. These migrants would rather face the uncertainties of town life alone. The new comer has to try his luck—the probability of getting an urban job. If, and when he secures one,—the waiting period may be long—he has to adjust to the town ways of life, secure accommodation and save some money to convey his family to the town, if they have to join him. This picture of chain migration has changed very little; family migration is not very common. The arrival of a wife or wives and children does not end the trend. Other relatives, near and far, may join the trail. These relatives are most probably job-seekers who in most cases are to be housed, fed, clothed and assisted in securing an urban petty job. The end product of such chain migration is a rise in the number of household members congestion and an increasing financial burden on the head of the household. Not all members of the migrants' family eventually join him in the town. A substantial part of the migrants, especially the low income group, have a wife/and/or children in their rural homes.

The residential pattern of the migrants' family members was investigated, among other things, in our survey of rural urban migration. In Oshogbo, 86 per cent of the wives and 82 per cent of the children of the migrants' heads of households live with them. These children consist predominantly of the young, who therefore needed parental care, or those at preparatory or the primary school level. The wives are in most cases full-time housewives who take care of the home; or engage in petty trading and craft. A small proportion of them are workers—teachers, nurses, secretaries, etc. While 7 per cent of the migrants wives and 11 per cent of their children stay in the husbands' home place, 7 per cent of the wives and 7 per cent of their children live in other towns: that is, other than the survey towns and the husbands' home place.

Such a residential pattern becomes inevitable in a society undergoing a period of industrial development. Most of the few urban employment opportunities are preferentially offered to men. There are fewer opportunities in wage employment in the town for most rural women, partly because the bulk of the women do not have the prerequisite—education—for urban jobs. This is in itself an outcome of a cultural bias whereby more of the boys than the girls were sent to school. In Southwest Nigeria, the development of "career" women did not start until the 1930s.²⁸ The few educated women then took up jobs in government departments, firms, private companies, etc. Such jobs kept them away from home for a good part of the day. Men are rapidly, and successfully breaking into some professions—nursing, secretaryship, telephonists, tailoring—which, until recently were the preserves of women.

It was therefore a rational economic decision that wives and children stay at home with grand-parents, work on the farm, feed themselves from the proceeds, supplement or preserve urban family income. In his study of Ede, Beier remarked that "no typical Yoruba woman would like to depend solely on her husband in her economic life." (1955:39).

The bulk of the women who reside with their husbands are either traders or they practise a craft. Most women see the need to work in order to supplement family income, train the children and raise the family's standard of living. They now employ baby nurses to look after the children

instead of sending them to a mother at home. At times, these parents move to the urban areas permanently to look after the children when the husband and the wife (wives) go to work or trade. The trend whereby most of the migrants' children spend some of their years at home in order to be exposed to the village culture is now gradually being reversed.

The Socio-Economic Links with 'home':

The links between rural and urban areas in Yoruba land are strong and intimate. The Yoruba living in the village traditionally looks upon the town as his real home and owes direct social allegiance to it. (Goddard, 1964:21) Rural-urban migration has fostered much stronger socio-economic links. (Adepoju, 1972:16)

Responses to the questions on residence, on first arrival in the town, frequency of home visits and remittances to 'home' family enable us to quantify some of these indices of socio-economic links.

As we pointed out earlier, the new migrant to the town faces a host of problems—where to live, how to get a job, how to earn the daily bread during the waiting period. Almost 61 per cent of the migrants—mainly the employed wage earners on transfer—in Ife and 45 per cent in Oshogbo, rented accommodation on their first arrival in the town. Of the remaining, 73 per cent with relatives—members of the extended family—on their first arrival in Oshogbo. Only about 16 per cent and 11 per cent stayed with friends and apprentice masters respectively. The data for Ife showed that 77 per cent resided with relatives while 22 per cent stayed with either friends or apprentice masters on first arrival. Members of the extended family help their kin in no small way in the initial and crucial process of living in, and adjusting to, town life. Since all Yoruba cities are pre-colonial and traditional, the strong links with the countryside are long-standing. This makes the absorption of newcomers a non-disruptive process. Urban life is in most cases traditional. Most of the urban centres are non-industrial and most of the strains and stresses of purely industrial cities are, therefore lacking. Newcomers are able to continue their traditional family ties in a near-familiar environment. (Smythe & Smythe, 1960:56-7)

Most rural-urban migrants in the town live a dual system. (Olusanya, 1971:413) They belong, not only to the towns in which they live, but also to their villages. The feeling of attachment to home-place—in form of frequent home revisits and home remittances of money and goods—is much stronger than the attachment, if any, to the town of residence. This observation is however not peculiar to the Yoruba migrants alone. Udo (1972:4) observed that this village patriotism or indentification with home-place is a common feature amongst migrants all over the country. Imoagene, in his survey of Sapele, had this to say about the migrants with their families in the home village, labour migrants necessarily regard the town as an extension of the village community and reduce rural-urban migration to a mechanical process involving forward and backward movement between town and country." (1972:4)

Yoruba migrants in the cities maintain strong socio-cultural ties with their 'home' families. About 43 per cent of the migrants in Ife who do visit their home family do so frequently—they revisit home between seven to twelve times a year. About 40 per cent of Oshogbo migrants are frequent revisitors to home family. Another 41 per cent of the migrants in Ife revisit their home families occasionally, that is two or six times annually. In Oshogbo, 38 per cent of the migrants are occasional revisitors. Ten per cent in Ife and 17 per cent in Oshogbo rarely revisit home.

In Ife and Oshogbo, about 83 per cent and 78 per cent respectively revisit home families regularly. Only 6 per cent in Ife and 5 per cent in Oshogbo do not revisit home or have severed connections with home family. Very probably, this category left home under unusual conditions or have no surviving members of their family back home. The frequency of visits is influenced, to a large extent, by the distance to the migrants' home-place, the residential pattern of the migrants' family members, age and duration of residence in the town. Those with wives and children at home, the young and new arrivals in the town and the intra-state migrants are the most frequent revisitors to the home family.

The tie with home family is not only socio-cultural. It is also economic. About 40 per cent of the migrant heads of households in Oshogbo and 50 per cent in Ife do send money home. In Ife while nine per cent remit under N£5 annually, 24 per cent remit over N£40 a year. Among our Oshogbo migrant heads of households who remit money home 12 per cent remit under N£5; 27 per cent remit between N£11 and N£20 and 19 per cent send over N£50 home annually. In Oshogbo, 51 per cent remit money home regularly ranging between nine to twelve times a year, 41 per cent between three to eight times and nine per cent once or twice a year. The bulk of the remittances is used for the upkeep of the home family—grand-parents, migrants' own wives and children resident at home, other members of the extended family and relatives. Part of the remittances is used to cover costs of school fees, books and uniform of the migrants' children at home. Yet another part goes for building or a house where some migrants hope to live in old age or on retirement or when they finally return home to spend the last part of their lives. Most migrants want to die and be buried at home, beside the graves of their ancestors. Some migrants use some of the remittance to set up petty trade for their wives resident at home; pay labourers on the farm or for funerals or weddings or to defray debts incurred.

The findings of the urban consumer survey in Ife, Oshogbo and Ilesha showed that remittance of money home to maintain relatives took 18.3 per cent of the average monthly monetary transactions of the heads of households. Gifts accounted for 8 per cent.¹¹ Migrants, during their periodic revisits, take home gifts—clothing, food items—and goods to members of their home family and other relatives and friends. This invariably eats up a substantial portion of the migrants' income. It also demonstrates the strength of the link migrants have and maintain with their home family. It shows, furthermore, the extent of dependence of rural families on urban earnings.¹²

Conclusion

Socio-cultural links between Yoruba urban and rural residents are intimate. It is, in part, an outcome of the development of towns and the outlying villages. There is a peculiar, traditional, system of dual habitation among the Yoruba, whereby the village is regarded as a place of work (farming) rather than a permanent place of abode. Then, almost every Yoruba was a town dweller. The picture has, however, changed considerably in recent times.

The growing concentration of amenities, industry, commerce and administration in the urban centres has attracted people from the rural to the urban areas. It has affected the pattern of residence of the family. The socio-cultural links have changed to socio-economic ties between urban migrants and their village family.

The trend whereby the rural family looks upon the urban resident members of the family for remittance and occasional gifts may continue unless the disparity in development and income

between the rural and urban areas closes up. Unlike the Yoruba traditional rural setup the family in the urban centres is no longer the basis of production and consumption but of consumption alone.

FOOT NOTES

1. The term family is widely interpreted among the Yoruba. "The smallest domestic unit in Yoruba society is the simple (nuclear) family—man, wife and their children. Since polygyny prevails as more common unit as the compound family—man, 2 or more wives and the children of all the wives." Galletti *R et al.*: *Nigerian cocoa farmers*. Oxford University Press. 1956. P. 67. To a typical Yoruba in the village, the family implies the extended family. This—interpretation of the family will be adhered to here.
2. According to the 1952/53 census, Oshogbo had a population of 122,728 and Ife 110,790. The 1963 census returns are rarely used because of their questionable validity.
3. A migrant is defined as anybody born outside the survey town. The offspring of a migrant is a non-migrant if he/she is born in the survey town.
4. Patterns of residence in most Yoruba towns follow a rather clear pattern—distinct, residential areas depending on ethnic, economic, or educational criteria. The three district zones are "migrant," "mixed" and "indigenous" quarters. See Schwab, W. B.: "Oshogbo—an Urban Community?" in Hilder Kuper ed: *Urbanization and Migration in West Africa*. University of California Press, 1965 p. 88.
5. WAY FORUM. "People" Magazine No. 69 June 1965 p. 1.
6. See I.L.O. Mission, Western Nigeria: *Population of towns, 1963—Town Dwellers Distribution*. Ibadan, 11th May, 1965 (Mimeo). (Quoted from Olusanya, P.O. Box op cit. 1-2.)
7. Nigeria: *Population Models for National and Regional Planning, 1952-67*. Physical Planning Research Programme, Interim Report No. 1 N.I.S.E.R., Ibadan, March 1969. pp. 26-37.
8. For instance, the survey of small-scale industries in Western State conducted by the Department of Economics, University of Ife, record no employee under age 10, and only 5 apprentices in Ife, 6 in Oshogbo and just 2 in Ado-Ekiti were under age 10 years.
9. *Urban Consumer Surveys in Nigeria, 1963/64: Oshogbo/Ife/Ilesha* Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos. 1967 P. 8.
10. *Urban Consumer Surveys*. Op. cit. pp. 9-15.
11. *Urban Consumer Surveys*. op cit P. 19
12. Poverty and mal-nutrition are the lot of the Nigerian villagers. Parents sacrifice from their extremely poor returns to send their children to school, with the hope that on completing, they would seek non-farm occupations in the urban areas, and thereby lead a better life than they (the parents) now do. These parents, in return expect their children to send money home for the up-keep of the family. Most rural house-holds depend on such remittances and would be poorer without this urban-rural flow of money.

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