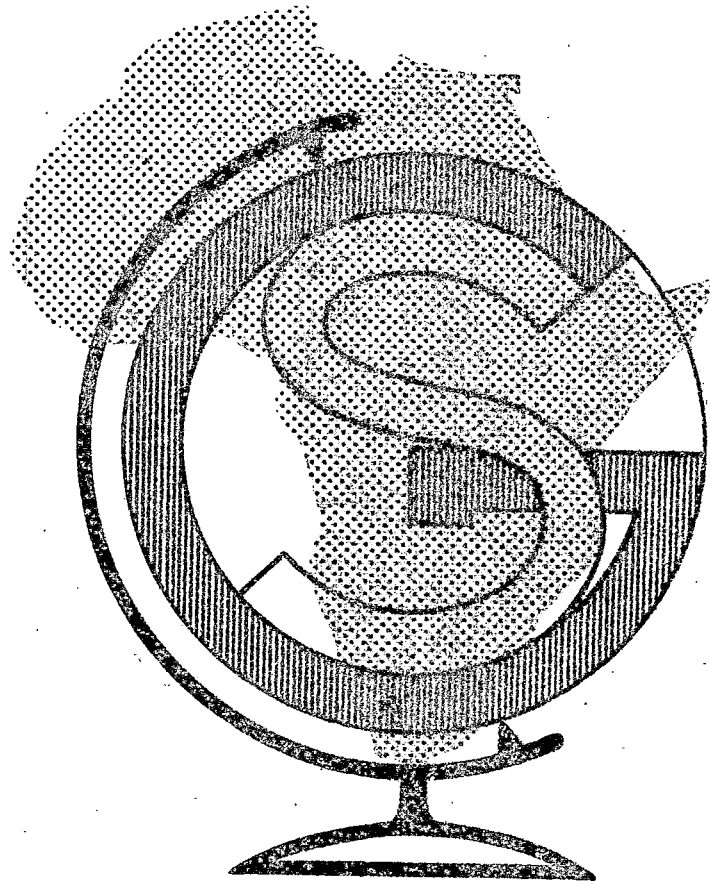


THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
MAGAZINE



UNIVERSITY OF RHODESIA

1971/72



CONTENTS

	Page
Committee 1971-72	
Editorial	
Geography at the University of Rhodesia..... S.Madzokere	1.
Geography in an Age of "Love" R.W.Tomlinson	6.
On Environmental Pollution and Biogeography.. K.W.Nyamapfene	9.
Fire: A Grassland Farming Factor C.K.T.Vengesayi	14.
Some Problems of Irrigation Farming at the Nyanyadzi Irrigation Scheme P.Mbiriri	16.
The Purchase Areas of Rhodesia A.K.H.Weinrich	20.
Livestock Farming in the Economy of a part of the Sabi-North Tribal Trust Land N.T.Gocha	25.
Labour Migrations and Rural Economies O.Mvura	29.
Industry: Its Basis in Africa E.S.Nhandara	32.
A Visit to Acucareira Sugar Plantation, Mfambice P.E.A..... E.M.Munowenyu	35.

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Opinions expressed in this Magazine are the sole responsibility
of the author.

Editorial

This is the second issue of the Geographical Society Magazine, the first having been published at the beginning of 1971. The original aim of the Society was to publish at least two issues a year, but due to a disappointing response to the appeal for articles, this had not proved possible. However, we are glad that we have eventually managed to get the magazine into print, with some articles of a high standard. To quote the Editorial of the last issue, we hope that "in reading them you will find much that will enrich your store of geographical knowledge, and much that will challenge you into taking a keener interest in all that is around you - your micro-geography."

Compared with 1970, the Society did not have a particularly active year in 1971. A number of meetings and field trips had to be cancelled either through lack of support from the members or because of organisational difficulties. For instance, a trip to Malawi in the second term had to be cancelled because no suitable accommodation could be found. We found many of the meetings that were held during the year most enjoyable, but the attendance was at times disappointing. We therefore hope that the coming year will be a more active one for the Society, and that all the members will give their fullest support to the Society and the Committee.

Membership to the Geographical Society is not limited to students and staff of the Department of Geography. Members from other Faculties and Departments of the University are always welcome; we are confident that you will find something along your line of interests. And in case you did not know it, we sometimes give out free beer at our meetings, but we cannot tell you at which meetings. So the best way to avoid disappointment is by turning up at all meetings. Finally, your articles will always find a place in the Society's Magazine; you need not be a geographer to contribute to it. This is one of the numerous ways of sharing ideas for, after all, that is the purpose of a University. So, if you have anything to offer, please send it as soon as possible to:

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Mount Pleasant.
SALISBURY.

LABOR MIGRATION AND RURAL ECONOMIES

O. Mvura.

Labor migration plays a role in rural economies. It contributes to the redefinition of economic situations, attitudes, values and goals and provides new economic behavioral patterns. But in the application of the concept of causality to the relationships between labor migration and its concomitant economic manifestations, it is of analytical value to view some of the relationships as concomitant adjustments within a changed economic system and the other relationships as causal relationships. In the case of concomitant adjustment the relationship is only correlational and has no causal implications. There are factors in the background which link labor migration and the economic manifestations. In the other case the relationship is one of reciprocal causation.

Labor migration is the geographical, social, economic and political movement from the rural system of economic relationships to work in industrial areas (and also from industrial area to industrial area). It, therefore, implies an element of horizontal and vertical dissociation from the rural economic system, a transition and an involvement with a new economic environment, a new context of physical space and economic relationships. At any one time the migrant resides in one of the two economic systems but economically he belongs to both.

The causation of labor migration is the interaction of factors associated with the area of origin (rural area) the area of destination (industrial area), intervening obstacles and also personal factors. There are both negative and positive factors affecting labor migration at both origin and destination and the probability of labor migration depends on the balance between positive and negative factors at both origin and destination. Hence the application of the concept of centrifugation and centripetalism to the causality of labor migration.

The predominant cause of labor migration is economic necessity and the effect of economic factors depends on the degree to which subsistence is possible within rural areas. Areas with viable subsistence systems have a lower migration rate. However, generally, it is rarely possible to obtain cash for basic needs within the framework of the rural agricultural system because unpredictable rainfall, simple agricultural methods, procedures and techniques, the non-availability of adequate and suitable land, markets and capital, lack of enough education and useful and usable agricultural knowledge, government policy towards rural agriculture, high population densities, and to a lesser extent, religion, all militate against profitable agriculture in rural areas. The other causes are social, psychological and political and their effect depends on social, economic, and political location of potential migrants in rural societies and their appreciation of their location.

The rate of labor migration is a resultant of a collectivity of social, psychological and economic forces and the differential impact of these collective forces determines the incidence of labor migration. The volume varies with area diversity and therefore with agricultural productivity, and with seasonal fluctuations, and both rate and volume tend to increase

Subsistence systems which have division and specialization in the work of men and women are adversely affected by labor migration: in such systems men traditionally undertake heavy tasks so that their absence reduces agricultural production by impairing some phases of agricultural operations and ultimately the rate of domestic capital formation. However, since most rural crops are perennial labor migrants return to rural areas during the growing season. But this is also the time when their labor is in great demand in the farming industry. Further, the irregularity of rains presents an obstacle to this arrangement. Furthermore, the rural social and economic aspirations have risen to a level where they can no longer be satisfied by short spells of migration. In rural societies, where there is none or little sexual division of labor, labor migration seems to be beneficial. In areas where there is pressure on the land and the productivity of labor approaches zero, labor migration does not affect agricultural output. It reduces land shortage and under-employment. In areas where there is no pressure on the land labor migration causes labor shortages and cultivated acreages are reduced and agricultural production falls.

Labor migration is selective and its effects on the distribution of population has deleterious effects on agricultural production. Its selectivity is determined by sex, age and education. The majority of the migrants are relatively well-educated, young men. As a result rural populations are heavily weighted by women, children and males over 35 years of age or, on another dimension, by semiliterate, conservative traditionalists. Labor migration, therefore, drains the most productive element of rural populations and leaves rural areas with those men and women who are least capable of developing them.

The absence of large numbers of men leads to an increasing need for women to achieve more economic independence. Ordinarily, the minimum economic unit is the family, comprising a man, a woman and their children and married couples are relatively independent of the assistance of other people. However, a new form of female co-operation is developing as a result of the absence of men and the introduction of new agricultural equipment and the need to increase production.

Migrant participation in the system of industrial relationships affects their beliefs and value systems. Migrants learn about western economic organization. This, together with exposure to western agricultural methods, contributes to technological changes in rural agriculture. Labor migration is, therefore, an educational process. It results in the changing of attitudes and practices that are obstacles to economic improvement, the inculcation of attitudes that are conducive to these improvements into rural communities and generally the creation of a greater receptivity to economic change.

By far the most widespread effect of labor migration on rural societies is material economic changes. Through labor migration men are able to bring back to rural areas goods they cannot obtain under rural economic conditions. The immediate effect is the raising or at least the maintaining of the standard of living.

The impact of the migratory system on rural economies should not be exaggerated (further labor migration is not the only vehicle of change). Traditional kinship and economic and political relationships have not been seriously affected by labor migration, because these relationships are bound up with rights and obligations which are inextricably tied up with rights to land occupation and use. Even this aside, migrants have no security of employment because they are on the whole unskilled and present themselves for employment in large numbers and work for short periods. Because of their lack of skill

of the fact that they have land in rural areas to provide for their subsistence, their labor is cheap. The possession of land also militates against their development into a proletariat. However this possession of land gives them a certain independence and prevents excessive exploitation of their labor. Economic factors, therefore, play a major role in tying migrant laborers to rural areas. Their wages are below the minimum required to support a family in an industrial area. Working on the assumption that migrants leave their families in rural areas where they fend for themselves, employers fix wages at the level deemed necessary for a single man to maintain himself in an industrial area. Even families with sufficient revenue to support themselves, in industrial areas, have generally not got social security. The social and economic solidarity of the village provides a ready substitute. Psychological factors are also important. Many high income earning migrants maintain ties with rural areas because they conceive of themselves as members of rural communities because of their early socialization in rural environments. In sum, it can be said that, for the majority of labor migrants commitment to rural areas is because of economic pressure and for the semi-elite migrants the commitment is internalized.

The relationship between labor migration and the economic changes in rural areas suggests that in the process of economic change societies tend to adjust to new economic conditions through their existing institutions. These economic institutions survive but with new values in a changed economic system.

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