

Ethno - Historical Analysis of the Effects of Migration on African Family System

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Received 15 January 2014; accepted 12 April 2014

Published online 20 April 2014

Abstract

The paper is an ethno-historical discourse on the necessity and empirical realities of the migratory trend and its effects on African families/societies. It is clear that while people migrate from one location to another, for personal reasons, these multiple needs have chain effects on both the people and socio-cultural development of the societies. African traditional histories are based more on migration of the people in one form of settlement area or the other and these affect sometimes negatively the family system which was principally extended. Cultural values and norms are being broken or abandoned hence, creating multiple problem conditions in society. The paper articulated the various forms of migration, causes and consequences to individuals and family units and by extension of the society. Some of the identified causes of migration include; poverty, diseases, epidemic, marriage, religion, etc. there are basically some benefits and disadvantages to this trend in every receiving and releasing locations. The paper mainly among other things concludes that migration can be stopped but can be planned for to create positive impact.

Key words: Ethno-historical; Migration; Families; Africans and societies

Takim Asu Ojua, Tiku Takim Oru, Chimezie Atama (2014). Ethno - Historical Analysis of the Effects of Migration on African Family System. *Canadian Social Science*, 10(3), 43-49. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/4521>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/4521>

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of ethno-Historical reality of migration is quite necessary and imperative in human existence and necessity through with the conditions that are changing. The movement from one location to another in search of greener pastures is not new in human history (Charles & Ikoh, 2008). What is new and has not been given adequate scholarly attention is the account of the migrants and emerging changes in the migrant's communities of origin as well as the receiving or host communities. According to Murdock (1999), the natural history of migration starts with the process or issues that causes migrants to move, and then continue to the expected ends or outcome. However, most studies on migration tend to address only the inception of migration, the outcomes of this migration especially as these affects the families from which these migrants steadily leave are ignored. It is generally noted that migration is necessary to boost growth in certain countries or locations. According to David and Allies (2007), Europe needs more migration to boost growth because more individuals will have jobs to help enhance economic development.

In pre-colonial times, migration occurred largely in search of security, new land which are safe for settlement and fertile for farming. Colonial regime altered the motivation and composition of migration by introducing and enforcing various blends of political and economic structures, imposing tax regimes and establishing territorial boundaries. A series of economic and recruitment policies-compulsory recruitment contract and forced labour legislation as well as agreements, were all measures employed to stimulate regional labour migration from Mali, Togo and upper Volta to road networks, plantations and mines in Gold Coast and Ivory Coast (Ojua & Omono, 2012).

Charles (2008) asserted that contemporary patterns of migration in Africa especially in West Africa are therefore

rooted in socioeconomic, political and historical – cultural factors which have shaped the direction of development and types of economic activities, and laid bold imprints in society and development policies and programmes on especially international migration. However, migration from, and within the sub-region includes temporary cross-border workers, female traders (especially involvement in cross – border trading), and farm labourers, professionals, clandestine workers and refugees and are essentially intra-regional short-term and male dominated, in response to the interdependent economies of neighbouring countries.

Migration's explanatory framework is basically premised on the push-pull factors, theory or hypotheses which fundamentally tend to overemphasize the intent and role of the individual in the migration process. Critics of this perspective argue that the decision of the migrant to migrate is based sometimes on group experience; in particular the costs and benefits to the family, rather than being an isolated calculation. Furthermore, an individual's decision to migrate is conditioned by multiple social and economic factors. For example, a member of a rural family may be motivated to migrate if urban employment translates into the diversification and amelioration of the family economy or if rural productive resources are not enough to sustain an extended family. Such out-migration probably would not occur if it was likely to produce an economic deficit for the family unit. Apart from this the decision to migrate is not calculated from an exclusively economic standpoint (Abasiokong, 2010). An individual can have an economic opportunity in another place, but not take it up if their departure would cause emotional hardship in the sender community. The family is the structural and functional context within which motivations and values are shaped, human capital is accrued, information is received and interpreted, and decisions are put into operation (Ottong, 1991). The family is the crucial agent of an individual's capacity and motivation to migrate. The complexities of the family structure characterize the migration process because the family unit mediates between the individual and society, and thus it can prioritize its needs over the individual's in many instances (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Migration: This refers to the movement of people from one place to another (Charles, 2008). Migration is considered as the movement of people from one geographical region to another, which may be on a temporary or permanent basis. Migration can be international (movement between different countries) or internal (movement within a country, often from rural to urban areas). People migrate based on the prevailing conditions and the reasons for it vary from one person to another depending on the situation that brought about

the decision. Migration is a selective process affecting individuals or families within certain economic, social, educational and demographic characteristics. Historical facts and oral tradition have shown that Africans are predominantly migratory people in nature and they are basically favourably disposed to this trend always.

Family: Lamanna and Riedmann (1995) defined the family as any group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption in which the people are committed to one another in an intimate interpersonal relationship and are importantly attached to the group which has an identity of its own. The family has often been regarded as the cornerstone of society. In pre-modern and modern societies alike it has been seen as the most basic unit of social organization and one which carries out vital of tasks, such as socializing children (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

Murdock (1999) defined the family as a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. Enang (2003) also asserts that the family is one of the social groups in all societies which form the most basic part of all human or social experiences. In most societies the family is seen as a social group comprising one or more women, their children and most often, men all of whom together made up a social acceptable unit.

2. TYPES OF MIGRATION

Rural-Urban Migration: Of all the types of migration, the most usual and most significant is the rural-urban migration. According to Zelinsky (1990) in Akpan (1999) states that the most usual are movements from rural to urban areas which are influenced mostly, but not entirely by economic factors. (Ottong, 1991; Ekong, 2003; Charles, 2008) observed that rural-urban migration (urbanization) goes hand in hand with development. Therefore, rural-urban migration is a growing trend in most developing countries which is the massive influx of people into cities or urban centre causing the urban growth (the expansion of cities and towns covering a greater area of land). Migration in the rural areas relieves population pressure and reduces unemployment, which reduces stress on the local or national economy. It also reduces the demand on natural resources.

Rural-Rural Migration: In spite of the immense attention given to migration and its effect on the families, studies have shown by theoretical and empirical evidences that rural-rural migration has been grossly neglected (Abasiokong, 2010). This is the movement of nomadic people. Rural-rural migrants are mostly unskilled labourer who could engage only on primary occupation of farming,

fishing, hunting, lumbering, wine taping and other menial jobs. Such occupational engagements, the author argues, leaves nothing tangible after subsistence to send home by way of remittance, or by way of new knowledge gained in the host community (Ottong, 1991).

Urban-Rural Migration: There is a significant urban-rural migration within Southeast Asia, with rural-urban migrants returning to villages as they lose urban jobs. An estimated 75 percent of the two million unemployed workers in Thailand are migrants from rural areas, and one million rural-urban migrants have returned to their villages in a massive urban-rural migration. Urban-rural migration is a typology of migration that involves the movement of the family from urban areas to the rural areas. This is because of the problem of congestion and unemployment associated with the urban centers.

External Migration: External migration is where people move to a different home in a different country or continent. This could be because people want to start afresh elsewhere, getting a new job or they could be fleeing the country. To migrate to another country you have to get a visa, this indicates that someone is allowed to move to another country. It can be a document but it is more common for it to be a stamp in a passport.

Internal Migration: Internal migration is where people move to a different home within the state or country. The reason for the internal migration can be due to increased crime rate in the environment, lack of money or just a change of life. Others can be due to natural disasters, epidemic and other environmental and unexplainable cultural reasons.

Chain Migration: Chain migration happens when a family or a small group of people make a series of migrations between them. Usually to start a chain migration someone out of the small group send money to the remaining members of the group, this is helped to move to a new location. Migration fields normally occur in chain migrations as everyone from that family or small group cluster together into certain neighbourhood or small towns.

3. SOCIOCULTURAL CAUSES OF MIGRATION OF FAMILY IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

We might think of reasons why people might decide to migrate from one place to another. We consider the push factor (why people might want to leave one place) and pull factors (why people might be attracted to a new place). The following are the major causes of migration of family in African societies.

Poverty: Poverty has always been in Africa especially in the rural areas. Therefore, in order not to be trapped-

down with poverty, people tend to migrate to where all the utilities and social amenities of life are available, people want to come out of poverty. Their present environment may be harmful, damaging, degrading and threatening to human existence or health. They want to move to places where there is hope of better opportunities and where they are sure of sustainable development and achieving their full potentials. According to Charles (2008), the dominant reason for migration was economic. For example, those who come to Akpabuyo to raise money complained of a general situation of joblessness, hardship and poverty in their villages of origin. The only answer to these problems lay in migration.

Marriage: Marriage is a union between husband and wife, marriage is an institution: a pattern of rules and customs in respect of some objective (or objectives). Marriage may be defined as the pattern of recognized usages governing establishment and continuance of the family group. Thus as an institution, it creates a number of well-known roles: husband, wife, father, child, grandfather, mother-in-law, which in every society have more or less clear patterns of expectations attached to them (Enang, 2003). Marriage is an important cause why the family decides to move from one place to another. For example, the Ngoni people intermingled with other Bantu stocks and other original owners of the territories sacked by the Ngoni-led war. Marriage brings about migration; this is common with women who migrate to meet their husbands in the urban. Most girls prefer to be tied to a migrant in city than to non-migrants because this affords them the chance to live the community.

Environment: There are different reasons held by different people why people migrate, but one major reason why the family members migrate is because of the desire for a pleasant social or working environment, easy and comfortable country to live. It is as a result of a prosperous territory with friendly climate and fertile soil for cultivation, which reflects the dominant occupational nature of the Africans for farming and pastoralism. Among the Nilotic people, their movement into the inter-lacustrine region of Africa is a critical example. Average rainfall was well spread throughout the year. Over the centuries the population of this part of Africa increased naturally and attracted waves of migrants to the area because of the easy life there. Also in the 13th century A.D. the Nilotic who lived along the Nile in Southern Sudan started to move into this inter-lacustrine region attracted mostly by its prosperity and fair climatic conditions. The Nilotic are traditionally cattle rearers and are known to be the tallest human beings in Africa, nay the world. The white Boers moved into South Africa with the sole aim of settling. New members of the white Boers, encouraged by the attraction of the area continued to arrive in South Africa because of the favourable climate.

4. CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY

Emigration weakens the native countries of the migrant, or countries of origin in diverse ways. As a rule, the emigration or expulsion of large numbers of people exacerbates the economic and political problems in their native countries. Young men with a good education account for disproportionate share of the migrant population because they are most confident about setting down successfully elsewhere. The World Bank estimates that there are roughly 10,000 university graduates fully or partly educated in Africa, living and working in western industrialized countries. The emigration of highly-qualified personnel from Asia may well be many times higher, the former Eastern bloc countries are also seriously affected by the so-call "brain drain": in the last ten years. Bulgaria has lost about twenty percent of its educated population due to emigration.

Successful emigrants encourage others to follow them. Emigration leaves noticeable gaps in the countries of origin. The loss of well-trained and experienced specialists reduces a nation's chances of building up workable economic structures by its own efforts. People moving to a world with a better infrastructure and higher standard of living soon become used to the new conditions. Only few are prepared to accept the power conditions on return to their country of origin latter. The example of successful emigrant's family encourages others to copy them. By passing on their contacts they help to cultivate a network that reaches out to ever-widening circles of compatriots.

Migrants help to alleviate the poverty in their native country, at least in the short term. Migrants frequently transfer a considerable part of their income to their families at home. According to UN estimates, these transfers amount to over 20 billion dollars annually. This corresponds to approximately one-third of the funds spent by industrialized countries on global development aid. With their money, the emigrants help to alleviate the poverty in their countries of origin in the short term. Private financial contributions improve the purchasing power of the families receiving them, but generally have little influence on the development of structures that would facilitate sustainable change.

Therefore, the expulsion of dissidents has an adverse effect on social development. Flight movements for instance triggered by repression or wars, on the other hand, are felt mostly at political and social levels. Opposition movements are nipped in the bud when their leaders are forced to flee by arbitrary arrests, torture or threats against member of their families. In countries where dictatorial conditions prevail and whose populations are terrorized by corrupt structures, only a small circle or people generally has access to land and profitable economic sectors. While the wealth of a few increases excessively, the population as a whole becomes visibly poorer. Those profiting

from such political conditions mostly transfer a sizeable share of their assets abroad in order to insure themselves against the unpleasant consequences of political changes. In migration poor neighbourhood or neighbouring countries bear the heaviest burden. Most migrants and refugees do not have the financial means to travel long distances. They seek a safe haven in another region in their own or in a neighbouring country. The economically weakest countries are therefore most severely affected by migration are refugee problems. According to estimates of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Western European countries were confronted with 2.2 million refugees and displaced persons in early 1999 (corresponding to 18.3 percent of the total number). In the same period, there were also 17.8 million migrants. In these countries there are about 20.2 percent of migrants worldwide. At the same time, over two-thirds of all refugees and displaced persons were to be found in Africa or Asia.

5. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

For the deeper understanding of this paper, the following are the theoretical orientations that are used to guide the issues under consideration.

- a) Neoclassical theory;
- b) Historical-Structuralism theory.

5.1 Neoclassical Theory

The proponent of this theory is Taylor (1987) and Lee (1988). This theory can be known or called Push-pull theory. This theory argues that people voluntarily migrate because it is in their best interest to do so; people move from low to high-income areas, from areas with high density to low density areas. In essence, this theory implies that there are push factors that compel people to leave their home countries and "pull factors" in the receiving countries that attract them. This is an individualistic a historical and very single-dimensional view of migration.

The neoclassical theory emphasizes the tendencies of people or family to move from densely to sparsely populated areas or from low to high-income areas, or link migration to fluctuations in the business cycle. Push factors include demographic growth, low living standards, lack of economic opportunities and political repression. Pull factors are demand for labour, availability of land, good economic opportunities and political freedoms. According to neoclassical theory, flow of labour move from low-wage to high-wage countries, and capital (including human capital) moves in the opposite direction. As a result, migration exerts downward pressure on wages in destination countries and upward pressure on wages in sending countries until an equilibrium is reached.

This theory hasn't been put to too much rigorous test. Studies generally have not examined expected wages

(the product of wages and employment rates), which since Todaro (1969) have been accepted theoretically as the relevant determinants of migration flows. The accumulated empirical evidence generally supports the neoclassical theory's fundamental proposition that immigration tied to international differences in wages rates. This theory has been link to the present study in that it looks at the migration of the family, as a result of pull and push factors. That the families voluntarily migrate because according to them it is of their best interest to do so. This theory has been widely criticized as it is unable to say why groups of people move, rather it holds that migrants are well informed when they move, that economic growth and determined stability is the main factor of movement and is unable predict future movements.

5.2 Historical-Structuralism theory

The major proponent of this theoretical perspective is Kuhn (1962). This theory is based on Marxist political economy and on world systems theory. It holds that migratory movements are a way of mobilizing cheap labour for capital and are the result of the unequal distribution of economic and political power between the developed countries and less developed countries. Unlike the neoclassical approach, the Historical-structural approach holds that migration is not a voluntary phenomenon, but rather a process through which capital recruits labour. It also argues that migration is a way for developed countries to maintain their hegemonic dominance over periphery, economies. This theory sees migration as an individual choice triggered by economic wellbeing when they are unable to satisfy their aspiration within the existing opportunity structure in their immediate community (Mongomery, 2003). This theory of migration has been criticized for attributing capital on omnipotent quality and not paying sufficient attention to individuals' personal motivation.

6. HISTORICAL REALITY AND MIGRATION OF FAMILIES IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

Africa is the second largest continent in the world relative to the United States and other major countries and regions of the world. Throughout history, Africa's spatial location has impacted its historical development and its dynamic relationships with other regions.

The movement of people, goods and ideas (religious, cultural, social and political) is of cardinal importance in the history of all regions in Africa. Future lessons will detail important movements, such as the migrations of the first humans from their origins in East Africa to other parts of Africa (and the world) and the migrations of peoples belonging to the Kongo-Niger Language family,

generally referred to as Bantu. Migrations (from central Africa to East and Southern Africa). The horrific forced movement of people in the Atlantic, North African and East African slaves trades, and the important long-distant trade routes (Trans-Saharan, East African) which resulted in the exchange of ideas (for example, the introduction of Islam in North and West Africa) as well as goods (gold, salt, textiles, etc.) will be discussed in this paper. Moreover, European colonialism, through the exploration of Africans natural resources, stimulated movement of labour migrants, both within countries (for example, mine workers in Zambia, Congo, Plantation workers in Kenya and Mozambique) and between countries (Massive Labour Migration to South Africa from neighbouring countries). As elsewhere in the world, geographic factors both hinder facilitate and hinder movement. (Great River Nile, Niger, Congo, Zambezi) and Lake systems (East/Southern Africa), for example, facilitate both trade and in-migration to lacustrine and riverine ecologies (development of settled and centralized polities). Desert and semi-arid areas in the interior of West and Central Africa, (to give another example) geographically hindered trade, in-migration and the development of densely populated polities. Geo-political factors continue to impact, as incentives and deterrents, the movement of people and goods in contemporary Africa. Being a land-locked continent, Africa has been a central issue in the economic development and political relationships of these countries. This reality has been a major factor, for example, in stimulating out migration (movement) of people from the land lock countries of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali to neighbouring coastal countries, Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana to the South.

Bantu Migration (1000 – 1800 AD)

Between 1000–1800 A.D., East African experienced a wave of migrations from different parts of Africa. The Bantu from the Congo or the Niger Delta Basin were the first to arrive, followed by the Luo from Bahr, El, Ghazel in Southern Sudan and then the Ngoni from Southern Africa (Haviland, 2003).

The term Bantu refers to group of people who speak the same or similar language with common word "Ntu" which means a person. The Bantu-speaking groups include the Baganda, Banyiro, Batoro in Uganda, Kikuyu, Akamba, Meru, Embu, Taita, Giryama, Digo in Kenya and Pokomo, Chagga, Tao, Segeju, Zarame in Tanzania as well as many other smaller groups.

There are two versions explaining the migration of the Bantu. The first version asserts that the Bantu came from West Africa around the Cameroun highlands and Bauchi Plateau of Nigeria, therefore, this points to the Niger Basin as the possible cradle land of the Bantu. The second version posits that the Bantu came from the Katernga region in South Eastern Congo. Gradually they spread Eastward North of forest and Southward to the forest's

edge near the lower Congo or Zaire and lower Kasai. The occupation of the North-Western (Cameroon-Gabon) was fairly slow due to different in languages. Elsewhere especially in Eastern and Southern African beginning at the edge of the forest, the spread must have been fast due to the relationship in languages (Cunningham & Reich, 2006; Ojua, 2012)

The Bantu is believed to have moved in four groups. These groups were; inter-lacustrine Bantu, Central Bantu, High land Bantu and Southern Tanzania Bantu.

Inter-Lacustrine Bantu or Western Bantu

This group was also referred to at the lake region Bantu. They entered East Africa between Lake Edward and Albert and settled in the areas North and West of Lake Victoria between 1000– 1300 A.D. They were basically agriculturalists. Other moved west to Kenya and Eastern Uganda.

Central Bantu

These moves into East Africa between Lake Edward and Lake Tanganyika and first settled in central Tanzania between 1000 – 1300 A.D. for e.g. the Sukuma and Nyamwezi. Others later crossed and settled in Tanzania Plateau and Taita hills around 1300 A.D. Others move while others moved to the North.

Highland Bantu

These settled in the Kenya Highland around 1600 – 1800 A.D. These include the Kamba, Kikuyu, Embu, Chuka. They probably moved north from the taita hills. Some writers have suggested that about 1300 the Chukka came up from the Tana River and were the first to arrive in the Mount Kenya Area. The Embu followed them about 1425, the last group, the Kikuyu seems to have arrived in the Muranga by the middle of the 16th century and in Kiambu by the end of the 17th Century. The migration of the Embu further was halted by the masai. The migrations of the Meru and related groups probably began at the coast.

Southern Tanzania Bantu

This group entered through Lake Makawi and Lake Tanganyika. They are also believed to have come from East Africa around 1000 – 1300. These group includes the Bena, Yao, Hehe. According to the tradition between about 1519 and 1698, the Swahili sectors of Kiliduni, Changamwe and Tangana moved to Mombasa and formed Kalin dini town. Where they had earlier migrated from Shungwaye because of attacks by the Galla and Somali. The Segeju and various section of the Milikenda and other Swahili groups who join the Kilindini group and related peoples on the main land behind Mombasa later joined them. The Pokomo and Segeju traditions also suggest the theory of disposal from the Shungwaya. The Pokomo say that they descended from Shungwaya Bantu immigrants. However, due to contacts with other

groups, they became a mixed community with Galla, Swahili, Segeju Somali blood. The Segeju believed that in second half of the 9th century the Galla attacked their ancestors. One group fled to the Lamu islands and nearby areas where they intermarried with the local Swahili to form the present Bajun or Tikue. A second group fled to the Sowerana, the ancestors of present-day. Buu section of the Segeju left the lower Tana and moved to the present homes.

The Swahili-Arabs Merchants Movement into the East African Coast

As early as the 5th century A.D., some immigrants from South East Asia came through the Island of Madagascar to settle at the East African Coast. This natural bridge provided by the Island for the South East Asians made it easy for them to cross into East African coast with Asian food crops such as rice and beans. They established trading posts and latter trading settlements along the East African coastal regions. These trading settlements extended to cover Zambia and other islands. Arabs in the trading settlements obtained slaves and Ivory from the Bantu traders and exchanged them for fire arms. Due to this contact through trade links has given one more language (Suahili) to Africa.

CONCLUSION

Human migrations in historic times have transformed the entire aspects of lands and continents and the racial, ethnic and linguistic composition of their populations. Migration trends in Africa have had similar consequences in different parts of the societies and affecting families at different points. The people of the continents and the consolidation of its racial, ethnic and linguistic landscape certainly cannot be totally separated from the consequences of the various migratory movements. Migration of people across national borders and continents is crucial for peace, stability and development at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The potential for migrants help transform their native countries has captured the imagination of national and local authorities, international institutions and the private sector.

Though people migrate from rural to rural areas, rural to urban, urban to urban, urban to rural areas etc. for different reasons, these migratory activities affect family stability to a larger extent in different ways and at different times. The trend although may be economically, culturally and socially beneficial to either the receiving or sending countries, can be very devastating especially when and if the receiving countries or locations did not adequately prepare for such a crowd. No matter how it is seen, the paper upholds that even the location of emigration suffer from many issues including loose of quality labour force or man-power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an emerging consensus that countries can cooperate to create triple wins-for migrants, for their countries of origin and for the societies that receive them. Based on the following observations, these recommendations are made:

1st. There should be equal distribution of the population. For instance, when more people migrate from rural to urban areas, it creates a populace block in urban areas resulting in instant increase in population. This result in negligence in the primary sector and thus the fundamentals of the economy don't flourish.

2nd. In Africa, corruption should be minimized in order to avoid urban-rural migration because in rural areas there is lesser government intervention and; criminals and corrupt civilians flee to rural areas to avoid legal consequences.

3rd. To increase more job opportunities in order to enhance a country's GDP and ensure equal distribution of income.

4th. Industrialization should penetrate through an economy and under developed areas of a country should be developed and the rural-urban division should be eliminated.

5th. Providing improved social and economic conditions in the sending countries to minimize factors that make people leave their countries in search of self-improvement.

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