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Modern Migration in Ghana and Mali: A Comparison of Urban Migration Patterns

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West Africa has a long tradition of human migration. Since the era of European colonization and during the twentieth century much of this migration has been rural to urban. This paper analyzes statistical data, observations, and interviews to compare the impacts of this migration on the cities of Bamako, Mali and Accra, Ghana. This analysis supports the conclusions that rural to urban migration in Ghana has resulted in the creation of an urban subsistence existence and an increased number of people participating in the informal sector of the economy. It further shows that when compared with Ghana, internal migration patterns and factors in Mali have resulted in much less growth in the urban population and informal sector of the economy. It appears that the people of Mali continue to prefer to engage in subsistence agriculture rather than to shift to a subsistence urban existence.

Africa has a rich tradition of human migration and the resulting cultural diffusion. The first species of prehistoric humans can be traced to the plains of Southern and Eastern Africa. The evolution of *Homo habilis* and subsequent migration of prehistoric man to Europe, South Asia, and other regions could be considered the first African migrations. Adaptation to the environmental stimuli resulted in the cultural characteristics of the populations in each region. More recent migrations in Africa were often initiated by the goals of attaining arable land, conquering rival peoples, or the diffusion of religion. A review of these factors explains the Bantu migration, the expansion of the Empire of Mali, and the diffusion of Islam in West Africa. These traditions of migration must be considered to better understand the present situation in the countries and primary cities under investigation, Accra, Ghana, and Bamako, Mali.

Migration is still occurring in the West African countries of Mali and Ghana. The economics, motivations, destinations, and demographics of migration vary

from country to country. Aside from the seasonal migration of the Fulbe herdsmen (Bruijn and van Dijk, 2003), migration within Mali and Ghana has primarily been from rural to urban. The numbers involved are significant. Researchers have noted that in Ghana, for example, "Between 1965 and 1975 net rural-urban migration in the region was 1.7 million. The total growth of the urban population during the period was 3.6 million or about 5.8% per year" (Zachariah and Conde, 1981). This paper investigates factors of current internal migration patterns in Mali and Ghana and pays special attention to the role of the informal sector of the economy.

The internal migration patterns of Ghana and Mali are quite different. In Ghana, rural to urban migration (to Accra, Ghana) results in an increase in the number of people participating in the informal sector of the economy. This is compared to a lesser rural to urban migration to Bamako, Mali, where migrants are less likely to participate in the informal sector of the urban economy. However, the increase in participants in the informal sector of the economies of both countries has created a subsistence urban population. This paper considers several secondary questions and issues. The first question is whether the migration and resulting increase in the informal sector of the economy in the countries is illustrative of a traditional African pattern or is a carry-over from traditions which became current during colonial times. Second, is it likely that the lessening of economic opportunities in the city results merely in a lessening of numbers of migrants or actually results in a counter migration, creating an urban to rural migration flow? Finally, there is the question of the accuracy of government assessment of the impacts of the current migration patterns. According to statistical data compiled by the governments of Ghana and Mali, the population engaged in the informal sector of the economy does not make up a large percentage of the total population of either Accra or Bamako. A brief review of the literature is in order to understand more fully the rural to urban migration pattern and the resulting economic impact.

Background

Rural to urban migration in Africa occurs on a greater scale than in any other part of the world (O'Conner, 1983). The motivation for contemporary migration is different in Ghana and Mali. The major cities in Ghana are Accra, the current capital of Ghana, and Kumasi, the ancient capital of the Ashanti Empire. Accra was founded during the fifteenth century by Ga settlers who established a profitable trade in gold and slaves with first the Portuguese and later the Danish, Dutch, and British. The control of Accra was contested by the Ga, Akwamu, and the Ashanti until 1874 when the British captured the city and, in 1877, made it the capital of the Gold Coast Colony. Bamako, the major city of Mali, is located on the Lower Niger River and was an important center of trade, communications, and Muslim learning during the ancient empires of the Mali and Songhai. During the fourteenth century, the Mali Empire became rich by trading gold, kolanut, and salt while participating in trans-Saharan trade. By the sixteenth century, oceanic trade

routes had diminished the importance of trans-Saharan trade, and Berber invaders had finally destroyed the ancient Empire of Mali.

The impact of colonial influences has been profoundly felt in every African country (O'Conner, 1983). This is true in Ghana, where the rural population has remained identified with the traditional family structure while Accra, the administrative, economic, and communications center of Ghana, represents the break from these traditions (Caldwell, 1968). In *African Rural-Urban Migration*, John C. Caldwell (1968) identifies five factors that cause Ghanaian rural to urban migration: "factors related to geographical, economic, agricultural, and social condition . . . biological factors of sex and age . . . matters of education . . . factors of family structure . . . and factors such as chain migration."

Prior to independence, migration in West Africa was caused primarily by a need for labor in mines or on plantations. During the late 1950s and 1960s this changed to a radical rural to urban migration based on the factors identified by Caldwell. In the twenty-year period between 1955 and 1975, the urban population of Ghana is estimated to have increased from 10 percent to 25 percent of the population of the country (O'Conner, 1983). The dramatic urban growth was the result of both a high natural increase and rural to urban migration. This pattern of rapid population increase continues. In 2001 the population estimate for Accra was 1,661,400 (Census Bureau, 2001). The current population of Ghana is 20,757,032 with an estimated population growth rate of 1.7 percent per year (Population Reference Bureau, 2003).

Like Ghana, Mali has identifiable pre-colonial and colonial patterns. As noted, during the fourteenth century the Mali Empire engaged in a rich trade in kolanut, gold, and salt as part of the trans-Saharan trade. Oceanic trade diminished the importance of trans-Saharan trade in the next century, and by the sixteenth century the ancient Empire of Mali had been destroyed by invaders. Traditionally two geographic factors have strongly influenced the development of Mali. First, Mali is landlocked with no access to the ocean. This has severely limited the export of goods. Second, due to its location in savanna, Sahel, and desert climatic regions, Mali has little arable land. The growing season is dependent on a short rainy season. Food production is pivotal to the well-being of an ever-increasing population of Mali.

In 1883, present-day Mali became part of the colony of French Sudan and remained under French control until independence in April of 1960. When the French built a fort on the strategic South Bank of the Niger River in 1883, the population of Bamako was between 800 and 1,000 (Brand, 2001). By 1898 hostilities had ceased between warring ethnic groups, and French colonists began to invest in the development of the city. Foreign investment fluctuated with the French political situation in Europe so that during World War I and the depression of the 1930s, there was little investment (Brand, 2001). Between 1945 and 1951, however, the population of Bamako increased from 37,000 to 85,000. Some of the growth, about 5,600 inhabitants, was attributed to international migration of

French and Lebanese traders. The majority of the new inhabitants, however, were internal migrants moving from a rural to an urban setting. Bamako has become a hybrid city following the patterns of both the Islamic city and the "European" city heavily influenced by French colonists (O'Conner, 1983).

Both traditional factors and colonial influences were evident in the migrations that occurred in Mali in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The use of Malian labor had been established along with colonization. In the case of Bamako, young men had been recruited to come to the city to work. In turn they helped support, by paying the property taxes, the collective interest of their villages. According to Koenig, Diarra, and Sow (1998), since independence in 1960 economic conditions have influenced Malians to move in order to improve their chances at making a better living. This movement was encouraged by the climatic limitations on agricultural production. The men of the village sought better economic opportunities elsewhere when not farming. As well, the migration pattern for Mali consisted almost entirely of movement from the northern regions to the south. Migration was especially marked during the periods of stagnation in agricultural production that characterized Modibo Keita's regime, 1960–1968, and during times of drought in the countryside, 1972–1974 and 1983–1984 (Koenig, Diarra, & Sow, 1998).

Bamako has felt the impact of all of the above-mentioned factors and patterns. The largest single growth period of Bamako occurred between 1968 and 1974 when, as the result of the new regime allowing private entrepreneurial initiative more room, the city grew from 182,000 to 317,000 inhabitants. Today Bamako is the administrative center of Mali as well as an important river port and regional trade center and has a population of over one million (Population Reference Bureau, 2003). Manufactures include textiles, processed meat, and metal goods. Mali as a whole has a population of 10,685,948 with a population growth rate of 3.0 percent per annum (Population Reference Bureau, 2003).

Methodology

In this study, the basis of analysis of rural to urban migration patterns for Accra, Ghana, and Bamako, Mali, consists of a comparison of population and economic statistics for the two countries. The information for Mali is drawn from *Annuaire Statistique Du Mali, 2002*, data published by Direction Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique of Mali and *Enquete Malienne sur les Migrations et l'Urbanisation (EMMU) 1992–1993*, published in the Réseau Migration et Urbanisation en Afrique de l'Ouest. The first publication is a comprehensive summary of statistical data for Mali during 2003. It contains information for previous years, enabling analysis and projection of trends. The second publication pertains specifically to the urban migration patterns within Mali from 1987 until 2001. A consistent year for analysis must be established for the purpose of comparison. Statistics can be projected to 2003. This will be the base year for comparison and analysis. The natural increase rate for Mali, 3.0 percent, will be used to calculate the population to 2003.

The statistical data for Ghana are found in the *Ghana Living Standards Survey, 1992–1999*, *Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey, 1997*, and *2003 World Population Data Sheet*, Population Reference Bureau. These three sources are, primarily, economic indicators with accompanying population statistics. Once again, two publications are comprehensive summaries of statistical data for Ghana and one is a general survey of statistical data. A problem arises because of the difference in the years of publication. The statistics for Ghana must be projected to 2003, enabling an accurate comparison between the two countries. In the case of Ghana, the natural population increase must be taken into account when considering the population increase of the urban center, Accra. As noted earlier, the population growth for Ghana, estimated at 2.1 percent, will be applied when computing total population increase and impact on migration trends.

Table 1 shows population figures for the city of Bamako, Mali, and the results of computing population growth from natural increase and migration.

Table 1. Population growth: Bamako, Mali
Source: *Comptes Economiques du Mali: Resultats Provisionels, 2004*

2001 Population	2002 Population	Net increase	% increase	Increase due to migration
1,025,838	1,060,792	34,954	3.41	4,206

As illustrated in Table 1, Bamako experienced a population increase of nearly 35,000 people between 2001 and 2002. This increase represents a population growth rate of 3.41 percent. Using Mali's natural increase rate of 3 percent to calculate the net in-migration results in a net in-migration to Bamako over the same time period of 0.41 percent or 4,206 people. Assuming the rate of increase was constant between 2002 and 2003, Bamako's population for 2003 was 1,096,965. The formula for the population increase and net migration is:

$A = b(c+d)$, where:

A = the projected population increase plus the net in-migration

b = the population for the base year

c = the natural population increase in percentage

d = the net in-migration expressed in percentage

The net in-migration for Bamako for 2003 was 4,498 persons. A breakdown of the data according to gender shows that, for 2002, the total number of males in Bamako was 554,156 or 52.2 percent of the population (*Comptes Economiques du Mali: Resultats Provisionels, 2004*). The projected breakdown of the 2003 population by gender, assuming the gender ratio remains constant is 572,616

males and 524,349 females. The same ratio can be used to compute the number of male and female in-migrants for 2003. There were 2,348 male in-migrants to Bamako and 2,150 female in-migrants for 2003.

Population data for Accra, Ghana are displayed in Table 2. In Accra, the population increased by 56,000 between 2002 and 2003. Based on the national population growth rate for 2002 of 1.7 percent, the expected 2003 population for Accra is 1,632,692. Calculating the difference between the expected and actual 2003 populations results in an increase due to in-migration of 28,708. The gender ratio in Ghana for people between the ages of 15 and 64, the ages of migration, is 49.8 percent male to 50.2 percent female. This translates into an in-migration of 14,332 males and 14,376 females to Accra. There is a considerable difference between the increase of the population from in-migration in Accra of 28,708, and that of Bamako, 4,498.

Table 2. Population growth: Accra, Ghana
Source: <http://www.worldbank.org>, 2004

2002 Population	2003 Population	Net increase	% increase	Increase due to migration
1,605,400	1,661,400	56,000	3.49	28,708

The next function is to ascertain the percentage of the in-migrant population who are working in the informal sector of the economy of Ghana and Mali. The definition of informal sector of the economy includes "all economic activities which are not officially regulated and which operate outside the incentive system offered by the state and its institutions" (Global Development Research Center, 2005, <http://www.gdrc.org>).

There has been considerable discrepancy between Ghanaian governmental statistics and statistics provided by other sources. In the *Ghana Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire Survey: Main Report* (The World Bank, 1997), the percentage of persons participating in the informal sector of the economy was 89.9 percent in the rural areas and 70.9 percent in urban areas for average of 83.9 percent. These figures are rather high and cannot be projected to the present because of the multiple variables affecting this population. The figure of 89.9 percent of the rural population participating in the informal sector of the economy could be based on the fact that the agricultural goods sold by farmers are often sold in informal markets. Therefore, following a strict definition of *informal economy* could yield such a high percentage. More recent estimates of the percentage of the population participating in the informal sector in Ghana range from between 25 percent and 30 percent, (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dwpp/countries/ghana/>, 2004) to as much as 60 percent (Bedwun, 2004). Even though probably low, the figure of 42.5 percent, the average of the low and high percentages, will be used to project the numbers participating in the informal sector. In this case,

there was an increase of 12,201 people working in the informal economy in Accra between 2002 and 2003.

The situation in Mali is much different. According to *Comptes Economiques du Mali: Resultats Previsionnels 2003*, (Direction Nationale de la Statistique Et de L'Informatique, 2003), 36.1 percent of the population participated in the informal agricultural sector of the economy. Those involved in the informal sector of the manufacturing economy made up 5.2 percent of the population, and those involved in the service, or tertiary, economy, 17 percent. For Bamako, the percentage of people engaged in the informal sector is much higher than the national average. Hall and Pfeiffer (2000) estimate that 80 percent of Bamako's population earns a livelihood in the informal sector. This translates into 3,364 people entering the informal sector of the economy in Bamako, Mali between 2002 and 2003.

Analysis

The analysis for each country's internal migration patterns must be considered separately. No major generalizations for the two can be made because of the uniqueness of each situation. This uniqueness is realized in the environmental, colonial, cultural, spatial, and economic factors that shape the societies of the two countries in question. For example, Mali's environment varies from tropical savanna to desert. Precipitation is seasonal with a rainy and dry season and a definite impact on the growing seasons of domesticated crops. Ghana is in the tropical rainforest to tropical savanna climatic region, which enables year-round production of crops. Spatially, Mali is landlocked, while Ghana has extensive coastal access with a major port at Tema. These factors, and others, result in different situations for the countries under investigation.

In the case of Mali, there is far less rural to urban migration. The migration of 4,498 persons to Bamako in 2003 is an insignificant number in comparison to the total population of the national capital of 1,095,692 persons. The significance lies in the small number. Historically, drought and agricultural failure appear to be the major push factors of the population shift from rural to urban (Brand, 2001). However, from 2001 to 2003, Mali experienced bumper crops in agricultural production, which may have reduced migration flows to Bamako (Institute for Security Studies, 2005). Moreover, there is a constant flow back and forth between the city and the rural area of goods and persons, with work and schooling acting as the pull factors to the city (Brand, 2001). According to African experts, some types of rural to urban migration are representative of long-practiced African traditions:

In various parts of Mali it has been a long-standing tradition that young males go "à l'aventure", to earn money for their families in the village—more recently to find the means to finance their own weddings... This period of adventure has become an almost necessary stage of life, a rite of passage into adulthood, which is also very gender specific. (Brand, 2001)

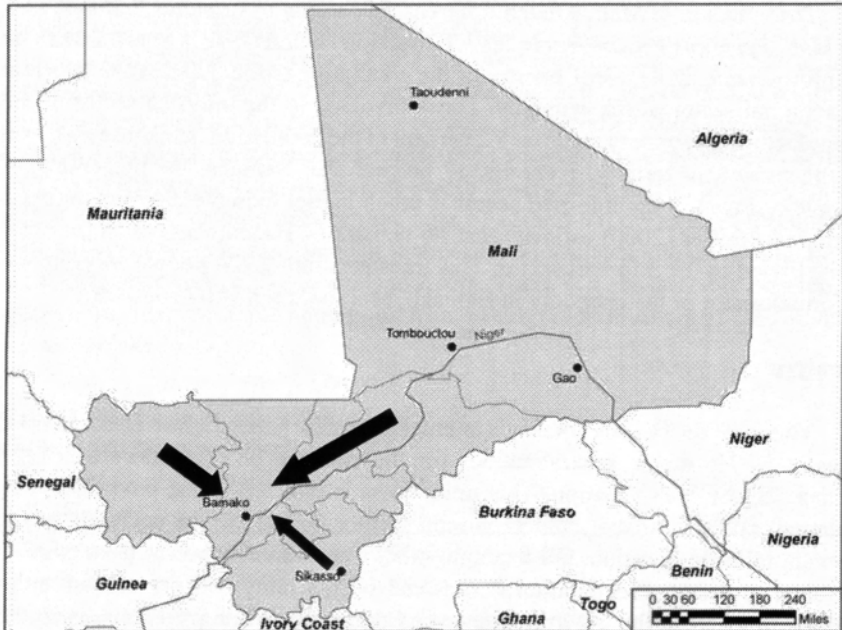


Figure 1. Internal migration patterns to Bamako, Mali.

Source: *Comptes Economiques du Mali: Reultats Provisionnels 2003*

Figure 1 illustrates the direction of migration in Mali. Young men often migrate to the city during the dry season and send remittances to their home village, enabling the payment of taxes on property. If this urban migration is seasonal and temporary, there is the possibility that the young urban male migrants were not counted as residents of Bamako. Furthermore, if the major push factor is drought, Mali may have been experiencing a period of agricultural abundance in 2003 and therefore little economic need for a rural to urban migration.

The situation in Ghana is very different. The rural to urban migration pattern in Ghana was negatively impacted in the late 1990s by the actions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programs, which combined to devastate the real incomes of a very large proportion of the urban population (Potts, 1995). This has resulted in the formation of three new coping strategies for the struggling urbanites of Accra. First, there has been a great increase in informal sector activity, with non-earning household members entering the petty commodity sector. Second, urban households have developed food-growing in order to supplement the diet. Finally, there has been a strengthening of the rural-urban linkage with an increase in the return of people to their rural homes (Potts, 1995). Accra has simply experienced a continuation of this in 2003.

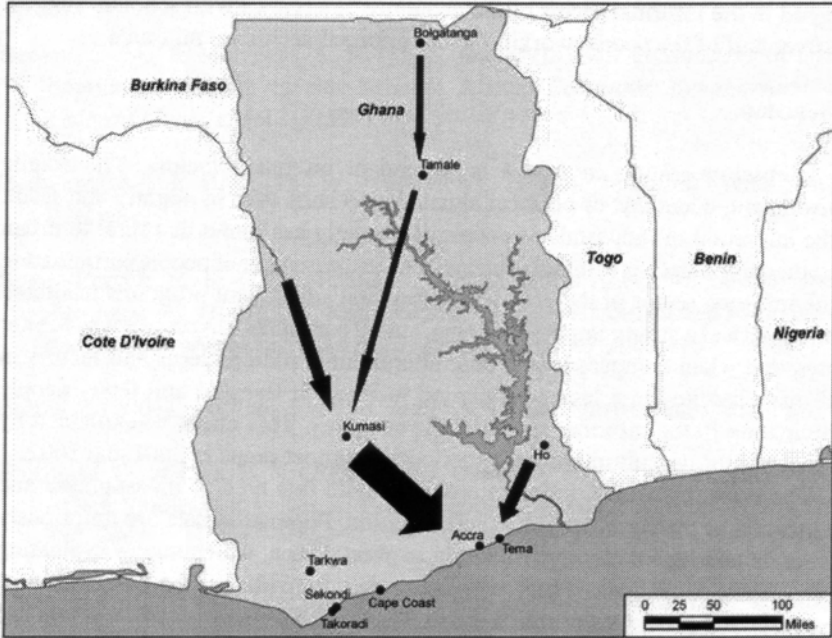


Figure 2. Internal Migration Ghana.

Source: <http://www4.worldbank.org/afr/poverty/pdf/docnav/02686.pdf>

The migration flow to the urban center is still in place but not to the degree of the 1980s and early 1990s. As shown in Figure 2, most internal migration is chain migration, in which people migrate from smaller centers to larger centers and finally to the largest centers of Kumasi and Accra. An urban subsistence existence has been created with increased participation in the informal sector of the economy and more land being used for urban food growing in Accra. Atta Bedwum (2004) claims that, "the informal sector for the most part is a subsistence economy. Therefore, a person is leaving one subsistence structure for another."

To return to the issues and questions posed in the introduction section, it is evident that rural to urban migration patterns in both Ghana and Mali are not illustrative of traditional African migration patterns. Rather, they result from economic circumstances created during colonial times. The pull factor of opportunities to earn a better livelihood, real or perceived, are drawing migrants to urban centers from the countryside. Despite the perception that economic opportunities may be decreasing, migrants continue to move to urban centers. At the same time data suggest that counter migration is also occurring, particularly with respect to older migrants. Finally, data do not support the governments of Ghana and Mali's position that migrants comprised a small portion of the people

engaged in the informal sector of the economy. Interviews with scholars suggest that over half of the people working in the informal sector are migrants.

Conclusion

Internal migration in Africa is dependent on many factors. The fragile environment, economy, or political situation can shift ever so slightly and result in the migration of thousands of people. This study has found that rural to urban migration in Ghana has resulted in an increase in the number of people participating in the informal sector of the economy. Structural adjustment programs instituted by the IMF had a strong impact in Ghana, and in particular in Accra. It was further shown that when compared to Ghana, internal migration patterns and factors in Mali have resulted in a lesser population increase in Bamako and fewer people participating in the informal sector of the economy. This might be explained by the fact Mali's agricultural sector experienced bumper crops in 2001 and 2002.

There are, of course, inherent problems with this type of investigation and the location of the countries under investigation. Population data are notoriously inaccurate and inconsistent, particularly in West Africa, which makes evaluating census statistics difficult. The issues arise when considering the designation of urban area and rural. One problem is that 97 of the 228 countries of the world use administrative criteria to distinguish between urban and rural areas. Therefore, the capital of a territory could be considered an urban area even though it has no other qualifying criteria. A city of 5,000 inhabitants may be considered urban in a sparsely populated country, but not in a country such as India or China. In this case, the questions pertain to the incorporated areas of Bamako and Accra. Are parts of the greater metropolitan areas of these two cities not included in the statistics, and could the inclusion of these areas affect the outcome of the investigation?

Finally, an urban subsistence existence has been created in Ghana. The increase in the numbers of people involved in the informal sector of the economy, cultivation of food in the urban setting, and the establishment of a reverse migration, urban to rural, are the justifications for the previous statement. This is more prevalent in Ghana than in Mali. Population statistics appear to show that the people of Mali engage in subsistence agriculture over a subsistence urban existence. It has been suggested that the solutions to this dilemma are technical education, (Bedwum, 2004), better urban planning, and improved education in rural areas.

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