

# *Immigration into Ghana, 1880s–1960s: An Examination of the Underlying Factors*

**ADJEI ADJEPONG**

[adjei.adjepong@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:adjei.adjepong@ucc.edu.gh)

+233-244974697 and +233-271898448

*Department of History*

*Faculty of Arts*

*College of Humanities and Legal Studies*

*University of Cape Coast*

*Cape Coast*

## **Abstract**

*By the 1960s, the size of Ghana's immigrant population had increased, in spite of the numerous immigration regulations devised by all the governments that came to power before the Progress Party government in an attempt to control the frequent influx of migrants into Ghana. If such was the situation, the implication is that Ghana offered favourable conditions to migrants, particularly those from neighbouring West African countries. Circumstances in the origins of the migrants also played considerable roles in the emigration of people who eventually found themselves in Ghana. This paper situates immigration into Ghana during the 1880s–1960s period in a historical context and, with the employment of the pull-and-push, or internal-external, approach, examines the circumstances under which population movements into Ghana occurred. The thrust of the paper seeks to offer a theoretical explanation, consequent on factual evidence, for the growth of Ghana's immigrant population during the stipulated period.*

## **Introduction**

The history of migration in Africa is as old as the history of the continent itself. Generally and historically, migration has been a facet embedded in African culture. In Ghana, the influx of people into the country could be traced to as far back as the period before the imposition of colonial rule. Adu Boahen maintains, primarily on grounds of linguistics and culture, that since the Twi, Ga and Ewe languages spoken in Ghana are not spoken anywhere else in the world, they must have evolved in the country (2000:5), but the traditions of origin of the various peoples themselves indicate that they all migrated into the country from different regions at different periods. Even the Guan, who are considered aborigines of the land, are believed to have entered the territory now called modern Ghana in the thirteenth century A.D. Later after their settlement, other peoples also entered Ghana. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Wangara traders, for instance, entered Ghana. After the arrival of the Portuguese in 1471, Ghana saw the continuous arrival of more Europeans. By the beginning of the colonial era, Hausa, Fulani, Arab and Mossi traders were also well established in the country (Peil, 1974:368).

Although the movement of people into Ghana started during the pre-colonial period, the influx of immigrants into the country became more noticeable during the

colonial era, as international political boundaries had been drawn, separating one country from others. Even after independence, there was no change in the trend of migration into the country. Some Ghanaians also emigrated to other territories, but the rate of immigration into Ghana far exceeded that of emigration from it. The reason is that Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and The Gambia were the three preferred migrant destinations in West Africa because of the comparatively more favourable socio-economic and political conditions they offered (Peil, 1971:209). As a result, the immigrant population in Ghana kept increasing to the extent that no policy, be it economic, social or political, could be made for the country without taking into consideration the immigrant population. Ghana's total population in 1931, for instance, was 3,163,464 (Engmann, 1986: 89), and out of this figure, immigrants formed 292,294, with Africans of foreign-origin constituting 289,217; 70,536 came from the other British colonies while 218,681 came from the French colonies (Engmann, 1986:210). In 1960, Ghana's population was 6,726,800, with immigrants forming approximately 827,000 (Crowder, 1968:339). Within a space of only nine years, the immigrant population reportedly increased to about 2,500,000 (Whiteman, Jan. 10, 1970: 1563),<sup>1</sup> constituting more than a quarter of Ghana's national population of 8,420,000 in 1970 (E.C.A. 1976:9-1).<sup>2</sup> Certain factors obviously accounted for this phenomenon, and only a comprehensive inquiry would lead to a better understanding of this development. Thus, approaching the phenomenon from the historical perspective, the study examines the factors responsible for migration into Ghana.

### **Contextual Framework**

For purposes of convenience, the analytical framework adopted here is the *pull-and-push* approach. This analytical model sees the causes of migration to be both external and internal. Theories of migration that traditionally distinguish between push and pull factors assert that motives to migrate can be either incentives, attracting people away, known as 'pull' factors, or circumstances encouraging people to leave, known as 'push' factors. 'Both the 'push' and 'pull' factors are economically, politically, culturally and environmentally based.

The push factors consist of war or other armed conflict, famine or drought, outbreak of diseases, poverty, political corruption, dictatorship, disagreement with politics, political fear – such as oppression, ethnic cleansing and even genocide – poor political prospects, evasion of criminal justice – such as avoiding arrest – primitive conditions, loss of wealth, religious intolerance, discontent with the local people in the form of frequent harassment, bullying and abuse, lack of employment opportunities, poor educational facilities, poor medical care, and natural disasters, such as changes in climate, stimulating a search for warmer or colder lands; volcanic eruptions or floods that render sizable areas uninhabitable; and periodic fluctuations in rainfall. Thus, a group of people may migrate in response to the lure of a more favourable region or because of some adverse conditions or combination of conditions in the home environment. Most historians believe that non-nomadic peoples are disinclined to leave the places to which they are accustomed and that most historic and prehistoric migrations were stimulated by a deterioration of home conditions. These factors, excepting disagreement with politics

and discontent with natives, generally do not affect people in developed countries; even a natural disaster is unlikely to cause out-migration.

The pull factors, on the other hand, include higher incomes, lower taxes, better weather, availability of employment opportunities, better medical facilities, education or better educational facilities. Others are better behaviour among people, political stability, religious tolerance, security and family links or family reunification. Whatever dimension these factors take, it must be noted that the causes of migrations have modified over the years. While some causes are constant, others do not carry the same weight today as years ago. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, labour migration did not have the same character as they do today.

### **The Choice of the 1880s–1960s Period**

This study considers the movement of people into Ghana beginning from the era of the European partition of Africa in the 1880s, and its accompanying splitting of people of the same ethnic stock into different groups under the sovereignty of different nation-states, to the 1960s. The choice of the period is arbitrary but purposeful. Genuinely, for the non-existence of artificial boundaries, movements in Africa before the imposition of colonial rule were never regarded as international; nor were any travel documents required for those movements. The terms ‘immigrant’ and ‘emigrant’, indeed, did not exist in pre-colonial African philosophy, and, thus, do not have their exact equivalence in most African languages. They were ‘alien’ to the African way of life. They only gained acceptance into African languages with the arrival of the Europeans and became applicable during the colonial era. Movements of people into Ghana, therefore, became more noticeable as from the 1880s, as political boundaries had been drawn and imposed on Africa. 1969 also saw the inauguration of the Busia administration, and this government was to bring about a drastic change in the implementation of immigration measures, especially through the Aliens Compliance Order. Consequently, immigration control became relatively stricter under the new administration. The period is, thus, significant in the history of immigration into Ghana.

### **The Underlying Factors**

In Africa, movements occurred across frontiers to restore ecological balance, in search of greater security and in search of new land, safe for settlement and fertile for farming. Migration across frontiers to spread religion has also always been a normal feature of life within the West African sub-region. Migration between neighbouring countries with similar social and ethno-cultural features took place on a routine basis in the past and even continues today. Migrations in search of jobs and for trade purposes have also taken place. The introduction of certain harsh measures by the colonial authorities in the German colonies and the Federation of French West Africa caused the movement of people from these areas into neighbouring British territories. Factors such as changes in climate, floods and periodic variations in rainfall have all been causes of migration in Africa. Economic development and modern transport and communication systems have also influenced the rate of migration in Africa today as elsewhere. In the Ghana situation, factors of similar nature combined to cause the influx of migrants into the country, bringing about the growth of the immigrant population.

The nature of migration in Africa during the pre-colonial era contributed to the spate of migration across borders in the colonial and post-colonial times and, for that matter, immigration into Ghana. At this time, there were no well-defined political boundaries, and members of different ethnic or tribal groups had lived across large areas without being divided by any formal artificial barriers. The colonial powers, however, imposed arbitrary borders that divided people belonging to the same tribal or ethnic group and put them under different European colonial powers. For instance, the Akan cut across modern Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, while the Ewe also inhabit a large stretch of land covering Ghana, Togo and Benin. The Hausa-Fulani are found mainly in Nigeria and Niger and in other parts West Africa, whereas the Lobi are found in both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, and the Busanga and the Mossi in both Ghana and Burkina Faso. The Banyamulenge (Tutsi) cut across Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other ethnically homogeneous groups split by artificial national boundaries include the Mande, the Vai and the Kru in Liberia and Sierra Leone; the Makande in Mozambique and Tanzania; the Yoruba in Nigeria and the Republic of Benin; the Banyarwanda in Rwanda and Uganda; the Kwakwa in Uganda, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo; and of course the Somali ethnic stock in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Further, members of pastoralist and border populations around the continent, such as the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, and the Mandingo of West Africa all straddle the borders of multiple African countries.

Freedom of movement of persons across frontiers in Africa has, historically, been facilitated by the cultural affinity of communities divided by international boundaries. Thus, people did not recognise they were crossing boundaries for which they needed entry permits during the colonial and post-colonial eras because there were no artificial political boundaries that divided Africans during the pre-colonial period. Burkinabes, Ivoriens, and Togolese who had relatives in Ghana moved into the country without considering the existence of any artificial boundaries and vice versa.

Added to forces of social relations were the issues of proximity and porosity of Ghana's borders. A careful examination of the origins of migrants in Ghana in the 1960s shows that many migrants came from countries such as Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, and other sister countries. Many of these migrants took advantage of the relatively shorter distance between Ghana and their countries of origin to move to and settle in the country for diverse purposes. Connected to close proximity was the inability or failure of Ghanaian immigration officers to strictly patrol the borders of Ghana. By 1970, Ghana had forty-six operational or immigration posts opened at various points, namely, Accra Airport, Takoradi, Tema, Aflao, Kumasi, Dormaa Ahenkro, Half Assini, Tamale, Yakese, Omape, New Town, Alenda, Sewum, Jema, Elubo, Shia, Nyive, Manuse, Mpeye, Kadjebi, Wati, Batume, Baglo, Kpetoe, Ahamansu, Afegame, Leklebi Dafo, Honuta, Akanu, Ave Afiadenyigba, Dadieso, Ahiakro, Kwamesekrom, Krokosue, Paga, Yawgu, Hamile, Chereponi, Tumu, Bawku, Pulimakom, Bole, Tatali, and Cape Coast (Ghana, March 29, 1970:111–112).<sup>3</sup> Until 1970, when the Busia administration took steps to restructure the immigration service, however, only those posts at Accra Airport, Takoradi, Tema, Aflao, Kumasi, Dormaa Ahenkro, Half Assini and Tamale were manned by properly-trained immigration personnel; all the others were manned by policemen and

border guards with only one week in-service training (Ghana, March 29, 1970:111–112). In such a situation, migrants would find it relatively easy to enter Ghana.

The spread of religion was a significant factor in the movement of people across borders. As early as the eleventh century, there had been unimpeded movement of people within the West African sub-region to spread religion. While the spread of Christianity was mainly a European affair, Islam was spread mainly by Africans (Isichei, 1977:247). Maitatsine, who lost his life in 1980 during the religious riots in the northern Nigerian city of Kano, for instance, had migrated from neighbouring Cameroun (K. Addo, 2000:7–8). Ghana too received migrants who had entered the country with the view to spreading Islam. Hausa migrants to Ghana, who included mallams, iron smelters, musicians, craftsmen, soldiers of fortune, and merchants, acted as significant agents in the spread of Islam and literacy in Arabic. They succeeded in winning converts, especially among the northern tribes. Muslims were also found among groups of northern immigrants to the south. These were sometimes so numerous that the major Southern cities, Kumasi and Accra, came to contain Ghana's largest Islamic communities (Isichei, 1977:246). In the early 1960s, for example, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had among his personal consultants al-Hajj Sekou, popularly known as Kankan Nyame, from Kankan in Guinea (Levtzion and Pouwels, 2000:108). Not only did these Muslim immigrants come to spread Islam in Ghana but they also became involved in the country's politics (Levtzion and Pouwels, 2000:108). One cannot lose sight of the fact that by the 1960s, the population of non-Ghanaian Muslims had obviously increased.

Trade and other economic activities also made people migrate across frontiers. People migrating for economic purposes, precisely in search of jobs or trade considerations, are generally labeled labour migrants. Until the first half of the twentieth century, people did business freely outside their home areas. Even after the introduction of immigration regulations by several countries in Africa, labour migrants still continue to move from one area to another. In the 1970s, for example, approximately 21,000 migrants from Botswana, 10,000 from Swaziland, and 97,000 from Lesotho were in the Republic of South Africa for economic reasons (Lindsay, 1985:2). As Ghanaian traders such as Chief Biney and others did big-time business in Nigeria and elsewhere in the middle of the twentieth century, so did nationals of other countries, such as Dantata and Alhaji Coumassie of Nigeria, come to Ghana for purposes of trade (Addo, 2000:8). In fact, by 1959, there were over 200,000 Nigerians working in Ghana, mostly in trade or white-collar jobs (Isichei, 1983:436). Later, diamond digging and smuggling became a monopoly of Nigerians; yam selling in the huge Kumasi Market came to be dominated by men from Gao in Mali; and three-fifth of the butchers in Ghana in the 1960s were foreigners, mostly Hausa (Peil, 1971:207).

Non-Ghanaian Africans were not the only people who entered Ghana for trade and other economic activities. Europeans, Syrians, Lebanese, Indians, and people of other continental origins all migrated to Ghana. Asians who arrived in West Africa at the end of the nineteenth century found life in West Africa far better as compared to that of their poverty stricken villages back home. The reason was that the large expatriate firms like the United Africa Company, in supplying Lebanese shops with goods, were very liberal in the credit they allowed their owners. The banks also gave credit to Lebanese to finance the purchase of produce where they refused it to Africans, and eventually, they took over

from African traders the import-export business, retail and middleman trade (Crowder, 1968:293 and 297). They also became engaged in textile and grocery importing trades, money-lending, investment in houses and land, service and related activities (Hailey, 1957:411–412). These favourable economic conditions enabled Asians to increase their population in Ghana. Successful Lebanese, for instance, tended to back up relatives during their pioneer days (Crowder, 1968:296) In 1950, for example, the Asian community in Ghana alone numbered 1,370 (mainly Lebanese) (Hailey, 1957:411), and due to their commercial activities, 93 percent of the Lebanese population in Ghana was urban based, over 90 percent of whom lived in Kumasi, Accra, and Sekondi-Takoradi (Engmann, 1986: 229–230) .

Growth in cocoa production in certain African countries attracted migrant labourers into those countries. In the 1970s, for example, Sahelian migrants poured into Cote d'Ivoire to provide labour in the cocoa farms. Cocoa was first introduced into Ghana by the Basel Missionaries in 1858 from Surinam, but it became more common in the country only after 1879, when Tetteh Quarshie returned from Fernando Po with five cocoa pods which he planted at Christiansborg, Accra, and Mampong, Akuapem (Kimble, 1963:33). From 1900 onwards, cocoa cultivation spread from Akuapem to Akyem Abuakwa, Asante, Central and Brong-Ahafo Regions. By 1911, Ghana had become the world's leading producer. Production of cocoa continued to increase and generated a boom, especially in the 1920s and 1940s. This boom attracted immigrants from neighbouring territories who found jobs in the cocoa-growing areas of the country (Awoonor, 1990:221). This development culminated in the establishment of settlements in parts of the country wholly composed of African immigrants. By the 1940s and 1950s, there was hardly a village in Ghana without a Nigerian, and in Asante, for instance, there were whole villages of Nigerians throughout the cocoa-planting regions (Legum and Drysdale, 1975:B 473). The 1950s also saw marked seasonal labour migration from the neighbouring French territories to the cocoa-growing areas in Ghana, such that by 1951 the Mossi from Burkina Faso numbered approximately 130,000, and about 25,000 Songhai and Djerma migrants from Niger arrived in Ghana each year (Hailey, 1957:1385).

Certain harsh measures on the part of the colonial administrations in the German, Portuguese and French colonies in Africa before, during, and after the First and the Second World Wars also sent many Africans in those territories into the neighbouring British territories. This development increased not only the immigrant population but also the total population of these areas. Such harsh measures introduced by the colonial administrations included forced labour, direct taxation, the 'indigenat', corporal punishment for offenders and conscription.

In constructing railways and roads in their African territories and in other fields, the British government had resorted to the use of compulsory paid labour, but this was subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In 1930, the International Forced Labour Convention was issued, and the Convention defined forced labour as 'work or service exacted from any person under the threat of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily' (Hailey, 1957:1385). Following the issuance of the Convention, and even before then, forced labour was prohibited in British Africa, although in some areas, such as Northern Ghana, the practice

continued to some extent. In general, however, the use of force to secure labour in the British territories was at a considerably reduced rate as compared to their French, Belgian, Portuguese, Spanish and German counterparts.

In the Federation of French West Africa, for instance, all Africans not born in any of the four communes of Senegal – Dakar, St. Louis, Goree and Rufisque, and for that matter were not regarded as citizens – were classified as ‘subjects’ and were obliged to undertake labour for the administration. The most common use of labour was for road and railway construction, bridges, and telegraph lines and for the cultivation of crops to increase agricultural production (Crowder, 1968:186). An Act of 11th April, 1946 and the Labour Code of 15th December, 1952 prohibited compulsory labour in the French overseas territories, but in French West Africa and the Cameroons there existed various types of labour which contained elements of force (Hailey, 1957:1369). The same condition existed in the Belgian and Portuguese territories much to the annoyance of the local people.

Direct taxation, like forced labour, was seen not only as an instrument of servicing the administration but also as a means of forcing Africans to increase production of crops which were needed by Europe (Hailey, 1957:186). Under the French colonial system, taxation was imposed at such a level that in many instances, the farmer had to grow cash crops in order to be able to pay his taxes. In areas that did not produce cash crops in great quantity, particularly in parts of Sudan and Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), men had to sell their labour (Hailey, 1957:186). The unpredictable result of forced labour, as well as forced and direct taxation, was the exodus of many able-bodied men of Niger, Sudan, Burkina Faso and Guinea over distances of up to 2,000 kilometres, to seek employment in the British territories (Crowder, 1968:339). In these territories, pay was higher and generally more stable and labour conditions were better; unskilled labourers were normally paid at rates between three shillings and four shillings and six pence (3s. and 4s. 6d.) a day, while mining workers received 4s. to 4s. 6d. a day (Hailey, 1957:1437). Escape from forced labour, the hatred for direct taxation, the ‘indigenat’, corporal punishment for offenders and better conditions in British West Africa, particularly in Ghana, were strong determining factors in the migration of people from the German, Portuguese and French colonies to Ghana. In 1916 and 1917, more than 12,000 people left Cote d’Ivoire for Ghana (Boahen, 1986:135). Large numbers of Togolese also left for Ghana, and in 1910, as many as 14,000 Togolese migrated from the Misahohe district alone into Ghana (Boahen, 1986:135). It was also estimated during the First World War that obligatory cultivation of cash crops in Burkina Faso was responsible for 100,000 Mossi leaving for Ghana, and in 1930, again, 160, 000 labourers from Burkina Faso left for Ghana (Crowder, 1968:338).

Conscription also helped increase the immigrant population in Ghana and other British West African colonies. The French use of African soldiers date back to 1828, when two companies of Ouolofs were sent to Madagascar, and 1838 another company from Senegal was sent to French Guiana (Buell, 1965:5). African soldiers fought in the Crimean War in 1853-1855, in Mexico, in the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War, and Senegalese troops were utilised in the Morocco War of 1912 (Buell, 1965:5). Most of these soldiers were, however, volunteers.

Recruiting local soldiers in West Africa was originally carried on under a decree of 1904, which sanctioned the use of conscription in case sufficient volunteers could not be raised (Buell, 1965:5). The practice continued under other decrees passed in 1912 and 1918 (Buell, 1965:8). These decrees authorised universal conscription of able-bodied men. Their implementation compelled the local people to organise several revolts against the practice.

To assuage the feelings of the people, the government issued a series of six decrees at the same time, giving native soldiers a number of privileges such as exempting them from the 'indigenat' and taxation, granting them the privilege of naturalization under certain circumstances, and providing for the payment of allowances to the families of soldiers (Buell, 1965:8). In addition, the government authorised the establishment of agricultural and medical schools in West Africa, a sanatorium for invalid soldiers in each colony, and a reservation of certain categories of employment in the government service for ex-soldiers (Buell, 1965:8).

These enticements were, however, no remedy for desertion of the French territories by able-bodied men who wanted to escape conscription. The safest resort for those who did not want to be conscripted into the army was flight across the border into a neighbouring non-French territory. In 1917, Joost Van Vollenhoven, the Governor-General of the Federation, reported that the neighbouring British colonies had gained some 61,500 able-bodied men from French West Africa as a result of the compulsory recruitment exercise (Ajayi and Crowder, 1969:500). Even after the war, conscription continued on a regular basis under Governor-General Martial Merlin (1919-1923). From 1920 to 1922 alone, 48,000 men were conscripted and after 1922, the process continued at an average rate of 10,000 a year (Crowder, 1968:338). Ghana became the refuge for escapees, individuals and, indeed, whole villages, from Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The French authorities requested their British counterparts to repatriate the escapees, but the British authorities co-operated in a half-hearted manner. Only a few escapees were arrested and deported. The British were naturally glad to receive additional labour and tax-payers. Fearing that their return would end them up in the army, those who escaped deportation settled permanently and added to the existing immigrant population in Ghana.

Whilst most of the labour migration that took place in Africa was caused by harsh measures on the part of the colonial regimes, it soon became so entrenched in the lives of the people concerned that it became essentially a voluntary movement. Among some African peoples, migration was regarded as a form of initiation into manhood. Among the young men of Western Niger, the journey to Ghana became a tradition and the accomplishment added considerable prestige (Mitchell, 1970:27). Even when forced labour was abolished in Mossi in 1946, the economy of the land had become so inextricably involved in seasonal migration that the flow of young men to Ghana did not cease. Kumasi became a sort of Eldorado for the people of Western Niger, Burkina Faso and the Sudan, where the money they could not make on their own poor soil could be earned. When the Takoradi Harbour and the triangular railway lines linking Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi were under construction at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the gold and diamond mines were opened up, immigrant labour from Burkina Faso, Togo and Benin voluntarily moved into the country in search of jobs. Migrants from French West Africa were not the only people involved in this voluntary movement to



Ghana. There were voluntary migrants also from The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia and other African countries. Voluntary movement, thus, contributed to Ghana having 289,216 Africans of foreign-origin in 1931 (Crowder, 1968:339).

The discovery and exploitation of natural products or mineral resources also attracted immigrants into Ghana. The discovery of gold in Ghana touched off a gold rush and led to the formation of numerous companies. Most of them collapsed, but by 1882, as many as six mining companies were operating in the Wassa-Tarkwa districts (Boahen, 2000: 94). Mining actually gained footing in the country with the formation of the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation in 1897 by E. A. Cade. The success of the company encouraged another gold rush in Asante and Akyem and by 1901 as many as 3,500 concessions had been taken up (Boahen, 2000:95). Although some of them were abandoned, there were 114 still in operation by 1904.

The mining of manganese in the Nsuta area in 1910, the discovery of diamond deposits near Abomosu, and the discovery of bauxite at Mpraeso in 1914, at Nyenahin in Asante in 1920, and at Awaso near Sefwi Bekwai in 1921 all attracted several Europeans, Syrians, Lebanese and Indians (Boahen, 2000: 96). These apart, the Mossi of Burkina Faso, the Zaberma from Niger, the people from Sudan and other non-Ghanaian Africans also came to look for work in the mines in Ghana (Crowder, 1968: 337). A census taken in 1946 recorded an influx into Ghana of 52,000 Africans from British territories and 121,000 of foreign-origin who were working in the mines (Hailey, 1957:1384–1385).

As the British colonial administration sent some Ghanaians to form part of the nucleus of the Nigeria Civil Service, there were also civil servants from the other British West African territories brought into Ghana by the British authorities. K.A. Gbedemah's father, Awumee Gbedemah, a government dispenser, for instance, was posted to Nigeria in 1909 to serve for a period of six to seven years (Amenumey, 2002:73). This was mainly due to the creation of the West African Civil Service by the British colonial masters. Workers of numerous professions, such as book-keepers and artisans of various descriptions found themselves in Ghana in the employment of the colonial authorities while others were brought into the country by British and other European companies. Many of these workers returned home shortly after Ghana's independence, but others had, by then, become well integrated into the Ghanaian society and made Ghana their base, only paying occasional visits home.

Nationalist activities and the formation of regional organisations in West Africa added to the other factors to increase the immigrant population in Ghana. The National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), founded in 1920 by Joseph Casely Hayford, for example, believed that the educated people in the four British West African territories, The Gambia, Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone and Nigeria, should come together to fight for the rights of their people. In 1934, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, a Sierra Leonean, also founded the West African Youth League with branches in Ghana and Sierra Leone.

In attending their meetings, the members of these regional nationalist movements did not need to obtain any travelling documents nor any entry permits. The reason was that for years, the nationalists of the four British West African territories talked of British West Africa as one political entity. Some of the educated Africans even sometimes changed locations. Wallace-Johnson, for example, stayed in Ghana from 1934, when he

was deported from Nigeria, to 1938, when he was once again deported from the country by the colonial authorities for being too critical on them. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a Nigerian, also lived in Ghana until his deportation to Nigeria in 1938. The educated elite really did not see the four territories as distinct from each other since their problems were basically the same and more importantly they were all under British colonial rule. Joseph Casely-Hayford in 1925, at the third session of the NCBWA in Bathurst (Banjul), The Gambia, and Bankole Awoonor Renner, a Ghanaian lawyer, in 1937, called for a federation of the West African colonies (Amate, 1986:39). The West African Students' Union in London, in 1940 also made the same call (Amate, 1986:39). With this conception, political giants in the four British West African territories, such as Kwame Nkrumah, J. B. Danquah and Casely Hayford of Ghana, Wallace Johnson of Sierra Leone, and Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, all fought for the independence of one West Africa but not only for their individual countries.

Even in the late 1950s, by which time some African countries had regained their independence, the desire for the federation of the four British West African territories continued to appeal to several West African leaders. In 1958, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Nigerian lawyer, and Gabriel d'Arbousier, a Senegalese politician, separately and on different occasions made statements in which they advocated the formation of a union or a federation of West African territories (Amate, 1986:39) This was probably the reason why Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party adopted liberal policies and attitude towards the many non-Ghanaian Africans who trooped to Ghana after the re-attainment of independence in 1957.

Politics apart, the four British West African countries were linked by such institutions as the West African Airways, the West African Currency Board, the West African Court of Appeal and the West African Cocoa Research Institute. The French West African countries made enormous efforts to maintain their pre-independence joint institutions and even established new ones after independence. The Anglophone countries disbanded theirs, leaving only the West African Examinations Council, but the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 bonded these countries once again and such links, in no small way, also fostered free movement. The ECOWAS was formed in May, 1975 and Ghana's mass expulsion of non-nationals occurred earlier in 1969/1970. In view of this, one may be tempted to argue that the emergence of the ECOWAS did not play any significant role in the influx of migrants into Ghana, as it later did to countries like Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire. However, the Articles of Association for the establishment of the ECOWAS were signed by 14 countries in Accra on May 4, 1967, over two years before the mass expulsion (Mabogunje, 1972: 138). These articles said nothing about freedom of mobility for the people of these countries; but the integration of the markets of those West African states, which was being canvassed at the time, had considerable implication for mobility in the region.

Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist orientation, furthermore, encouraged many non-Ghanaians to move into and settle in Ghana without obtaining any valid documents. Nkrumah fanatically pursued the creation of a 'United States of Africa' under one government headed presumably by himself (Boahen, 2000:225). He worked assiduously to bring into being the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 through a chain of political

alliances. With the formation of the OAU in 1963, Nkrumah's hopes in the eventual unity of all African states increased, although it never became a reality. He continued to hold till his death the philosophy that Africa belonged to all Africans. To Nkrumah, therefore, Africans, irrespective of their country of origin, could freely move to and inhabit any part of the continent in contravention of visa requirements without being regarded as an immigrant, let alone an 'alien'. Commenting on Busia's expulsion exercise in a letter to a Reba Lewis, dated January 5, 1970, Nkrumah, then resident in Guinea, stated "... Now I hear they are driving out all so-called aliens. Imagine talking of African 'aliens' in Africa" (Milne, 1990:359). Moreover, in 1963, a decision was taken to allow all Lebanese born in the country before independence to apply for permission to remain in Ghana forever (Smock and Smock, 1975: 248). This apart, Nkrumah's government harboured political refugees from other African countries to the annoyance of most African countries (Boahen, 2000:230).

Liberal political policies aside, Nkrumah's government also adopted certain economic policies that favoured foreign businesses. Indeed, the CPP government inherited an economy virtually wholly dominated by expatriate firms and companies. The situation compelled Nkrumah to declare before parliament on March 5, 1957, that "one of the first things that must follow from independence was that citizens of Ghana must play a considerable role in the commercial and industrial life of the country than they had been doing earlier" (Boahen, 2000: 196). In its period, the CPP government made substantial changes in the fields of cocoa buying and banking, and this forced most of the expatriate firms including UTC, UAC, GBO, SAT, and CFAO, to voluntarily withdraw (Boahen, 2000:197).

Apart from these two areas, Nkrumah did not introduce any stringent measures to deal with the dominant position of expatriate institutions and enable Ghanaians to enter the retail trade, timber and mining fields; instead, Nkrumah's government gave grants and interest-free loans to expatriate mining and other companies that were running into financial difficulties to continue in operation (Boahen, 2000: 196). The result was that by 1960, expatriate firms and companies controlled the manufacturing, mining, construction, and insurance fields. Nkrumah's favourable economic policies towards expatriate institutions were, presumably, intended to prevent greater unemployment by the closure of those bodies or by the adoption of strict economic measures that would have adversely affected their operations. Nkrumah also, obviously, needed foreign investment and again, believed that Ghana could afford the free trade policy (Boahen, 2000:197). Whatever Nkrumah's intentions were, those tolerant economic policies encouraged the migration of other Africans and more Syrians, Lebanese, Indian, and Europeans into Ghana to participate in the economy of the country.

The availability of social amenities such as educational facilities, good infrastructure, hospitals, good drinking water, etc. played a major role in attracting people from one location to another in Africa. The availability of these in Ghana before her independence in 1957, and a couple of years after that, lured many migrants into Ghana. Proceeds from the booming cocoa industry, gold, diamond, timber and a host of other exports brought in a lot of foreign exchange for Ghana. The economy, thus, enabled the colonial power to undertake quite a few projects: the Takoradi Harbour, hospitals, motorable roads, railway lines and schools and colleges. In the 1940s and 1950s, Ghana's

educational system was more advanced than any other similar territory in Africa.<sup>69</sup> In 1957, when the colonialists left the political scene, Ghana's economy was still effervescent. The Nkrumah regime also made giant effort in educational and health development. More schools were built and hospitals and medical services were improved. In addition, the mileage of good roads was more than trebled. The Akosombo dam was built to produce enormous amount of electricity; sugar factories, breweries, distilleries, a steel mill at Tema, textile factories, cement works, and an oil refinery were set up. Canned meat, coca products, paints, nails, safety matches, roofing material and many other goods all came to be produced locally. Many nationals of Ghana's neighbouring countries entered Ghana and enjoyed everything the country had on offer, including fee-free education up to the university level. A quarter of the 1957 entrants to the University of Ghana, for instance, were Nigerians (Peil, 1971:220).

Escape from poverty, or risk diversification at the family level, surplus labour and the dearth of employment opportunities are traditional push factors in the movement of people in Africa. Their related pull factors are the existence of jobs and the demand for labour in a particular area. Poor individuals from less developed countries can have far higher standards of living in developed countries than in their countries of origin. Furthermore, the dual labour market theory suggests that indigenes of a 'developed' country are generally averse to jobs that involve lots of manual labor or drudgery. This aversion to secondary sector jobs often allows or even encourages immigration and makes it much easier for people from other countries to immigrate and find jobs.

In Ghana, the introduction of new methods of raising cocoa and new mining methods caused increasing demand for manual labourers on the farms and in the mines. After independence, the vibrancy of Ghana's economy also made readily available numerous menial jobs. Ghanaians' aversion to jobs that involved lots of manual labor or drudgery allowed immigrants to move to Ghana and swarm all fields of secondary sector jobs. An agency, Mines Transit Welfare Centre, was set up to recruit labour from the French territories for the mines in Ghana, and there was also a good deal of illicit recruitment under unsatisfactory conditions. For instance, labourers from the French territories who did not have money for their fare were "'sold' by lorry drivers to 'labour collectors', who in turn pass them on to employers (such as cocoa farmers) at a considerable profit" (Hailey, 1957:1411-1412). Initially no attempt was made to halt this process as immigrants were welcomed to perform manual labour the local people scorned.

Circumstances beyond human control, including desertification, drought or famine, and floods, also caused movement of people from one locality to another. In such circumstances, the affected areas suffer directly while places not hit by these occurrences become indirectly affected as they absorb waves of people uprooted by these events. The 1969-1974 drought that hit the Sahel compelled large numbers of the Fulani to move from the Sahelian countries of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to the coastal countries of West Africa, mainly Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo and Nigeria. In the 1950s, however, Ghana was the most 'industrialised' of all four English-speaking countries in West Africa, and, thus, absorbed the majority of migrants running away from famine and searching for jobs and food in an 'industrialised' area.

Political threats and armed conflicts were a major cause of migration in Africa, with political stability in an area being the related 'incentive' for migration. Just as the Preventive Detention Act of July 1958 sent many opposition members to the Nkrumah regime to other African and non-African countries, so did nationals of other African countries, under unfavourable political circumstances, troop to Ghana in search of refuge. Not feeling safe enough, during the 1967-1970 Biafran War in Nigeria, about 6,000 Ibo people flocked into Ghana for safety (Peil, 1971:208). Many of them refused to return home even after normalcy had been restored, either for fear of a revival of the wars or for other reasons, and settled permanently in Ghana.

Besides running away from unfavourable events, migration also occurred in Africa as a result of people's attempt to escape from certain conditions and responsibilities such as domestic control or dispute, tribal obligation, court fines, punishment, maltreatment at the hands of an older relative or husband, etc. Boys who resented paternal interference and dictation, or who were denied the girls they wished to marry, usually migrated to seek freedom elsewhere. The assumption of domestic control on the death of a father by an unsympathetic kinsman also forced people to emigrate. Occasionally also, people were punished for some wrongdoing by being dismissed from their home areas, and migration to another area offered the only possible means of surviving. Some migrants from the sister countries entered Ghana for these reasons, and such migrants normally settled in the big towns and cities for fear that settling in the rural areas would lead to their facing such molestations again from the chiefs in the rural areas (Ghana, August 20, 1970:607). Economic reasons apart, some scholars in the field of migration have identified all these as causes of migration in Africa.

Running away from boredom and adventure were yet other factors leading to intra-regional and inter-regional movement of people in Africa. Africans have always been mobile with economic factors as the main basis of their movements. At the same time, however, some of them merely enjoyed the movement and for this reason often went further than it was strictly necessary. In relation to boredom, people normally compelled to migrate were the youth. The youth also wanted to experience life in the towns and cities and in other areas other than in their own localities for the sake of adventure. Some people yearned to meet and move among strangers and admired the structures and facilities in the urban centres in their home countries and in other countries. Adventure drove some Sierra Leonean migrants to Ghana, and their experiences were expressed in songs which conveyed very truly rustic reactions to the relative whirl and bustle of Kumasi (Little, 1965:11).

Family links and reunion further greatly contributed, and still do, to migration in Africa, as a migrant's choice of location is, in some cases, strongly influenced by the presence of friends and relatives. Several studies on migration find a positive correlation between migration and contacts in the destination. The results are consistent with direct inquiries to migrants, which show that the majority of migrants sampled in these studies had contacts there before they arrived. The presence of one or more family members in a city or country enables the rest of the family to move into that country as well. Indeed, migration in Africa is usually a household rather than an independent, individual decision, and the decision regarding where and when to move is largely affected by the experiences of, and information received from, relatives and friends who have already

migrated. Some migrants seek to live with loved ones such as a spouse or other family members, and so some migrants usually return to their host countries from their periodic visits home with their friends and relatives. Migrants in Africa take advantage of the network of relatives and friends in other countries to ease the migration and relocation process.

During the period under review, example could be made of successful Lebanese, Syrians and Indians. Other non-Ghanaian Africans also followed a similar trend, and in their case, people from specific areas in certain countries normally congregated at particular areas in Ghana. For example, 97% of the Yoruba in Prang were from Ogbomosho, while 69% of the Ilero Yoruba in Ghana lived in Accra (Peil, 1974:370). Again, in December, 1970, it was hotly debated in the Parliament of Ghana that almost all the inhabitants of Kabosrueso in the Jasikan District in the Volta Region were immigrants, and that part of the Akposo tribe in Togo, near the Ghana border, had migrated en masse into Ghana (Ghana, Dec. 8, 1970:790–791). In these cases, friends and relatives who had earlier migrated into Ghana provided not only companionship to new arrivals; they also helped reduce the cost of moving in, and provide information, which potential migrants found valuable as job information channels were largely informal at the time. Further, relatives and friends provided temporary support, including food and accommodation. With these forms of valuable assistance, it was relatively easy for many people to enter Ghana.

### **Conclusion**

All these factors combined and created a situation which culminated in an annual immigration of 3500 by 1900, and after 1945, immigration picked momentum, thereby establishing a considerable immigrant population in Ghana (Henckaerts and Sohn, 1994:63). In fact, so ubiquitous were immigrants in Ghana that Bob Cole, a Ghanaian musician from Tarkwa, sarcastically remarked: “If you enter a village or town in Ghana and you do not find a Yoruba, don’t reside in that town because the inhabitants may be cruel.” Immigrants, especially Nigerians, had taken advantage of Ghanaians’ hospitality and flocked into the country in considerably high numbers. Initially, they were involved in agricultural labour, but they later became engaged in more sophisticated areas of economic activity such as sales, construction, and diamond mining. So active were they in the economic life of Ghana that by the time of independence in 1957, they had become an important factor in the process of economic development. In another way, the presence of these immigrants was to create unemployment, social vices and political insecurity for Ghana. It is highly contended, however, that irrespective of the nature of whatever factors that attracted migrants into Ghana, immigration could have been controlled if immigration regulations had been devised and effectively enforced. Paradoxically, the colonial authorities, Nkrumah’s government and the National Liberation Council (NLC) administration all made determined efforts to regulate immigration. Surprisingly, migrants never ceased to enter Ghana. It appears immigration was not effectively regulated during the pre-Aliens Compliance Order era. Meanwhile, any attempt to understand why the size of the immigrant community had grown to an appreciable level in the 1960s should be sought from both the external and internal forces that were at play during the stipulated period.

## Notes

1. The source of this information is an article entitled “Foreign Traders Purged”, which appeared in the January 10, 1970 edition of *West Africa*. The article has no author, but the paper was edited by Kaye Whiteman.
2. The abbreviation *E.C.A.* stands for Economic Commission for Africa, *Africa Statistical Yearbook*, (New York: United Nations Organisation, 1976), p. 9–11.
3. The term *Ghana* stands for Government of Ghana. For this citation and all others in the text in which *Ghana* has used as the author, we are referring to *Parliamentary Debates*. When referring to any of them, readers should pay much attention to the dates of these documents in order not to confuse one with another.

## References

1. Acquah, Benjamin. *Cocoa Development in West Africa*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1999.
2. Addo, Kwaku. *Illegal Aliens on the Run*. Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 2000.
3. Ajayi, J. F. A. and Crowder, M., Eds., *History of West Africa*. Vol. 2. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1969.
4. Amate, C.O.C. *Inside the OAU: Pan-Africanism in Practice*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1986.
5. Amenumey, D.E.K. *Outstanding Ewes in the 20th Century: Profiles of Fifteen First*. Vol. I. Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2002.
6. Austin, Dennis and Rathbone, Richard. “Ghana: Basic Information”. In *Africa Handbook*. Middlesex: Anthony Blond, 1969.
7. Awoonor, Kofi Nyidevu. *Ghana: A Political History*. Accra: Sedco Publishing Ltd., and Woeli Publishing Services, 1990.
8. Boahen, A. Adu. *Topics in West African History*. Second Edition. Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1986.
9. \_\_\_\_\_. *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Accra: Sankofa Educational Publishers Ltd., 2000.
10. Buell, R.L. *The Native Problem in Africa*. Vol. Two. Section X. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965.
11. Church, R.J. Harrison. *West Africa*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1957.
12. Crowder, Michael. *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson and Co (Publishers) Ltd. and Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1968.
13. Economic Commission for Africa, *Africa Statistical Yearbook*. New York: United Nations Organisation, 1976.
14. Engmann, E.V.T. *Population of Ghana, 1850–1960*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1986.
15. Government of Ghana, “Immigration Service”. In *Parliamentary Debates*. (March 29, 1970).
16. \_\_\_\_\_. “Migration from Rural Areas”. In *Parliamentary Debates*. August 20, 1970.

17. \_\_\_\_\_. “Kabusrueso Inhabitants”. In *Parliamentary Debates*. Vol. 4. December 8, 1970.
18. Hailey, Lord. *An African Survey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957.
19. Henckaerts, Jean-Marie and Sohn, Louis B. “Mass Expulsion in Modern International Law and Practice”. In *International Studies in Human Right*. 1994.
20. Isichei, Elizabeth. *History of West Africa Since 1800*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1977.
21. \_\_\_\_\_. *A History of Nigeria*. New York: Longman Inc., 1983.
22. Legum, Colin and Drysdale, John, eds.. *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents, 1969–1970*. (1975).
23. Levtzion, N. and Pouwels, R.L. Eds. *The History of Islam in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, Athens, 2000.
24. Lindsay, Beverly. “Migration and national Development: An Introduction”. In Beverly Lindsay, Ed. *African Migration and National Development*. University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985.
25. Little, Kenneth. *West African Urbanization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
26. Kimble, D. *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.
27. Mabogunje, Akin L. *Regional Mobility and Resource Development in West Africa*. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1972.
28. Milne, J. *Kwame Nkrumah: The Conakry Years: His Life and Letters*. London: Panaf, an imprint of Zed Press Ltd, 1990.
29. Mitchell, J. Clyde. “The Causes of Labour Migration”. In John Middleton, Ed. *Black Africa: Its People and Their Cultures Today*. London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1970.
30. Peil, Margaret. “The Expulsion of West African Aliens”. In *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol. 9, (1971).
31. \_\_\_\_\_. “Ghana’s Aliens”. In *International Migration Review*. Vol. 8, (1974).
32. Smock, David and Smock, Audrey C. *The Politics of Pluralism: A Comparative Study of Lebanon and Ghana*. New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., 1975.
33. Stichter, Sharon. *Migrant Laborers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
34. Whiteman, Kaye Ed. “Foreign Traders Purged”. In *West Africa*. (January 10, 1970).

**This work was published in 2012 and should be cited as follows:**

Adjepong, Adjei. “Immigration into Ghana, 1880s–1960s: An Examination of the Underlying Factors”. In Eric Sakyi Nketiah, ed. *Distance Forum: A Multidisciplinary Book of Academic Articles*. Vol. 2. Winneba: Department of Social Science Education, University of Education, Winneba, 2012. pp. 34–56.