Monsieur Josef Gugler
Joseph Gugler

Life in a Dual System:
Eastern Nigerians in Town, 1961*

"We can only appreciate the causal factors in labour migration by trying to see town and country or reserve and labour centre as one social field and to analyse the forces within it. I doubt whether social science is yet in a position to be able to do this" (Mitchell, 1959: 44).

Today, the majority of urban dwellers in Subsaharan Africa are an integral part both of the towns they live in and of the villages they have come from. I propose to describe this situation in some detail with data from Eastern Nigeria.

Twenty-five years ago Margaret Read (1942: 610) noted as the outstanding sociological phenomenon in the African labor situation that the great majority of temporarily urbanized Africans maintained some links with their villages of origin. Towns have increased in size greatly since and urban labor has become more stable. However, even among Africans committed to a full working life in town, many continue to maintain close links with a rural area they consider their home. They are urban residents loyal to a rural home: they live in a dual system.1

Research at the rural end led Van Velsen (1960: 265) to state for the Lakeside Tonga of Malawi:

"These absent villagers generally maintain a stake in the social and political structure of Tongaland; [. . .] they have a vested interest in its continued functioning and try to play their social and political role despite their absence.

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1. Because of this rural link, Wallerstein (1967: 501) refers to urban workers in West Africa as a 'quasi-proletariat'.
Tonga working abroad thus belong to two contrasted and distinguishable (but not rigidly separated) economic and social environments."

Throughout Subsaharan Africa urban dwellers regularly visit their rural homes where they make gifts, find wives, maintain land rights, build houses, intend to retire eventually, want to be buried; they receive gifts in return, offer hospitality to visitors from home, and help new arrivals in town. South Africa constitutes an important exception: here a considerable part of the urban population live, rear their children, and die in town. All their major ties are bound by the city in which they live, they have no longer any important personal links with the rural areas and no ‘home’ anywhere but in town (Mayer, 1962: 580).

**Rural Emigration.**

The data presented here were collected in 1961-62 from Eastern Nigerians in Eastern and Northern Nigeria. Part of the data stem from a survey of selected compounds in twelve Ibo and Ibibio villages. These villages can be regarded as patrilineal lineages. The villagers consider that anybody who ever left the compound still ‘belongs’ there: even the orphan who ran away in 1936 at the age of fifteen and never came back is expected to return one day. It was therefore possible to obtain basic information on virtually all people who were descendants of the present heads of the compounds. Given that rural-urban migration is recent and ultimate return to the village the rule, a representative sample of villagers away in town could be obtained.

Several places had an established tradition of people going away for long periods. ‘Furnace town’ had a system whereby every village quarter sent blacksmiths to a certain part of the country well before the British came there at the beginning of the century. Elsewhere men leave with their families for a ten months’ season of farming on distant land belonging to their community. There are also cases of farming on land rented from foreign people that are probably more recent. Men have also left and still do leave, mostly without their families, for prolonged periods of fishing, either on their own or employed by others.

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1. The terminology and the present tense used throughout refer to conditions as they were then. The financial support given for fieldwork and analysis by the German Research Association, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, is gratefully acknowledged.
2. I take pleasure in acknowledging the valuable assistance given me by students from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and from the then Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Enugu.
3. For an account of tenant farming in Eastern Nigeria see Udo (1964).
Altogether 582 men and 627 women were covered. Half of the men and a quarter of the women were away at the time of enquiry, not counting those who had gone to farm or fish. These villages had rates of emigration well above average, only one-third of the men but two-thirds of the women had never lived away.

Today towns provide most of the earning opportunities and hence attract most of the emigrants, though the ordinary—technically untrained—school leaver faces competition from a growing army of unemployed.¹ A few men in our survey were found to work in the rare plantations. There are also the tenant farmers just mentioned. Yet rural-rural migration appears to be very limited. The compounds included in the survey that had sent away 438 adults, accommodated less than 20 strangers: laborers, traders, teachers.

Many leave early in life. There is a pattern of children of primary school age being sent away to stay with a comparatively well-to-do relative, a teacher or a trader. The boy or—less frequently—the girl does some housework for the relative who provides lodging, food and clothes and may be paying school fees as well. A teacher transferred to another station sometimes agrees to take one of his pupils along: the pupil lives with him under conditions similar to those he would experience with a relative, except that the teacher does not pay his fees. Quite frequently a boy joins a trading relative as an apprentice and establishes himself on his own after some years: his former master then provides part of his trading stock.

Those who start later still rely heavily on relatives. Frequently a townsman—more or less closely related—agrees to take a man along on his return to town. He will make every effort to find him a job and provide free accommodation and food over a considerable length of time thus enabling the newcomer to acquire a veneer of town ways and try his luck.

From this system specific patterns of migration have developed in many places. In one village visited 55% of the male emigrants included in our sample had gone as far as Lagos, 11% to Ghana and one even to Sierra Leone; but 89% of the men absent from ‘Merchant town’ were living within Eastern Nigeria, 44% in a commercial town 60 miles away. This influence extends not only to the direction the emigrants go but also to the occupations they choose. ‘Merchant town’ has a tradition of trading and even today 33% of the male emigrants are traders. Similarly 38% of those absent from ‘Furnace town’ are blacksmiths. But the level of education plays a crucial role today: in one place 56% of the absentee men have clerical jobs.

¹. For the argument that migration from agriculture to towns characterized by widespread unemployment can constitute an economically rational decision, see Gugler (1969c: 144 f.).
in public or private administration, none of those from ‘Merchant town’ has been able to secure a similar position.

Whereas most men leave their community early in life as bachelors, a woman leaves in general only once a man has returned to marry her and take her along. In our sample 78% of the emigrant women lived with their husbands; the remainder were nearly all unmarried and most attended schools and/or were servants. The case of the divorced woman who had managed to become a hotel owner in town was exceptional.

Rural earning opportunities are limited because land is scarce in most of Eastern Nigeria and usually not transferable outside customary rights. Those who have found a niche in the urban economy have therefore a strong incentive to stay on. In ‘Merchant town’ there has until recently been a pattern of a trader definitely returning home on marriage. Some townsmen return when they find earning opportunities in or near home as teachers or traders. A few stay reluctantly at home because they are needed by their families for farming or are the only ones left to take over from a father who is aging or has died. But most townsmen are fully committed to earning their living in town. Nearly all expect to spend their entire working life away from their home place. Labor turnover is correspondingly low. When retirement age approaches attempts are made—frequently successfully—to have the birthdate changed to a later year. Once retired some manage to find other sources of urban income.

A Town: Enugu.

The main body of our data derives from self-administered questionnaires and interviews, mainly in Enugu. Enugu is a new town: following the discovery of coal deposits it was founded in 1915. In 1961 its population was approaching the 100,000 mark. Its collieries and railway workshops were probably the biggest employers of the region. Commerce was limited in comparison because Onitsha, only 65 miles away, had developed its traditional trading position on the Niger, while the overseas trade was centered on Port Harcourt. As the political and cultural capital of Eastern Nigeria, Enugu was serving a densely populated region, rich by African standards. The region’s population, estimated at eight million, had a majority from one ethnic group, the Ibo, who constituted about 70%. They dominated Enugu which is situated well within Ibo country, a fact that was reinforced by the employment policy of the collieries which recruited primarily from within a nine miles’ radius.

Because of Enugu’s recent origin, immigrants are not faced with a host community that could bar their establishment, though there
was an episode when the Enugu Indigenous Elements Union, in fact composed of people originating from nearby areas, put up candidates for local elections against the Stranger Elements Association (Sklar, 1963: 207 ff.). The Ibo majority can moreover feel politically secure and culturally at home in what is an Ibo town in Ibo country. Africans in general were more secure in the urban setting even in colonial times than elsewhere on the continent: apart from early uses of forced labor their movements were never controlled; Enugu was established on Crown Land acquired from the adjacent villages and Nigerians could obtain plots on ninety-nine years’ lease hold; building regulations were minimal. Africans were thus in no way discouraged from settling down and many seized the opportunity of building houses, frequently of the wattle-and-daub type, for their own accommodation and renting.

The discussion will center on some of the answers given to questionnaires by selected occupational groups of adult men. They are grouped as follows:

(A) Questionnaire interviews in vernacular and/or English: 38 retired junior staff from coal mines, 49 unskilled laborers from railways, 49 traders at Enugu market;
(B) same questionnaire self-administered: 58 senior civil servants, 26 professionals and contractors.

These two groups represent the extremes of the urban income distribution. They are also clearly distinct in terms of education: 31% of group A, but only 1% of group B had never attended school; 73% of group B had gone beyond primary school, but only 4% of group A.

We further indicate some of the responses given to a shorter self-administered questionnaire by students grouped as follows:

(C) 177 female students at the Women Training College, Enugu;
(D) 209 male students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the Nigerian College of Technology, Enugu;
(E) 34 female students at the same institutions.

Students at the University and the Nigerian College of Technology were about to join the elite; students at the Women Training College represent somewhat lower expectations. The sex division shows up distinct differences in the background of the students; the fathers of 48% of the male students had never attended school, but this applied to only 9% of the female students at the same institutions, the female students at the Women Training College fell in between with 30%.

1. Here again students from Nsukka and Enugu were instrumental in designing and administering the questionnaire.
2. The few cases of answers not available have been omitted throughout.
3. The majority of the female students will marry away from their community of origin. For this reason alone they might be expected to be less
A Working Life in Town.

A striking experience when talking to Eastern Nigerians in urban centers is that they will invariably stress that they are strangers in town. Irrespective of his birthplace every Eastern Nigerian can point without hesitation to a community in which his forefathers lived and which he considers his ‘home place’. It will be a rural community except for the few who descend from families long-established in Onitsha or one of the minor centers on the coast. The home community conversely refers to them as ‘our sons abroad’. They are expected to maintain contact and to return eventually. In fact only a few break contact completely, and the hope that they will return ultimately is not given up until their death. The intention to retire in the home community is general in the lower and still widespread in the upper occupation group; the students fall in between (see Table 1, infra, p. 407).

All the indications are that the intention to return home is actually carried out when it comes to retirement. Of 375 junior staff retired from the Nigerian Coal Corporation between 1946 and 1960, 31% had left an Enugu address. Many had returned to their home place since, some had died, some could not be traced. 13% still resident in Enugu were contacted. Nearly two-thirds had found another occupation (mainly unskilled and skilled labor, and trade) and it is probable that some of the third who declared themselves unemployed were engaged in illegal activities. All said that they intended to settle at home after they had completely retired from active life, one giving another village as a possible alternative.

These same people are fully committed to earning their living in town. Nearly all expect to spend their entire working life away from their home place. Losing their employment or their trade is the worst calamity that could befall them. Employers in Enugu are agreed that labor turnover is minimal. Even on retirement many will make an attempt to find other sources of urban income. The question referring to retirement had to be phrased: “Where do you intend to settle after you have completely retired from active life?”

In the following an attempt is made to assess the relative commitment to town and village and to explain it. Urbanization can be viewed from a number of vantage points (Gugler, 1969b). We will
here consider the urban dweller's residence, the locus of his economic support, and his social field.

**Residence.**

Urban residence is the one aspect of urbanization for which quantification has been achieved. Wilson (1941) developed a measure of relative length of urban as against rural residence, Mitchell (1956) used an attitude scale for answers as to intentions of future residence in town. We have already touched on what information we have with respect to such intentions, urban residence *ex ante*.

To measure urban residence *ex post* we might apply Mitchell's index of stabilization

\[
\frac{\text{years in town since turned 15}}{\text{years lived since turned 15}} \times 100
\]

—a modification of Wilson's measure. This raises, however, a number of problems. Men in our sample have quite frequently been in education beyond age 15: we will only consider their residence since they completed their training (see Table 1). It would be grossly misleading to count only the length of their residence in Enugu: many are highly mobile. In an account of places of residence and occupations since leaving school, 89% in group A and 47% in group B give more than one place of residence, apart from their home place. The major difficulty arises out of the fact that they have frequently resided in small towns or villages. However this was always part of their occupational career: they were usually in employment, most frequently as teachers, or in a few cases trading. The only exception are residences in the home place. I therefore propose to reverse Mitchell's index:

\[
\frac{\text{years in home place since turned 15 (left school)}}{\text{years lived since turned 15}} \times 100
\]

We find then three senior civil servants residing at one time in their home place, two as teachers, one of the contractors, again as a teacher, two of the retired junior staff. It is among the unskilled laborers that we find 33% who have resided in their home places, all farming except for three. Six qualify as migrant laborers by Mitchell's definition, i.e. they have spent more than one-third, though less than two-thirds of

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1. Variation between occupations is not as marked as one might expect because occupational mobility itself is high. To take only the most frequent changes of occupation: 41% of the senior civil servants had been teachers at one time, 43% of the professionals and contractors had been civil servants, 34% of the retired junior staff and 17% of the unskilled laborers had been employed by traders as servants or apprentices, 33% of the traders had been in domestic employment.
their life since age 15 (or since they left school) at their home place. Finally 20% of the traders have resided in their home places, all farming except for one teacher, one of them a migrant laborer.

**Table 1. — Residence**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born in home place</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always in towns* since age 15 (leaving school)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never resided at home since age 15 (leaving school)</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to settle at home on retirement</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>88%**</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to be buried at home</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%**</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Defined to have at least the status of divisional capitals.
** Husband's home included for female students.

This approach both over- and under-emphasizes the degree of urban commitment of our population because the measure used takes age 15 (school-leaving) as the starting point. On the one hand childhood is neglected: in all groups, except for women at university level, a majority were born in their home place. On the other hand the assumption is implicit that the decision to go to town or to stay at home is taken at age 15 (on school-leaving). However 6 of the 7 migrant laborers in our sample had spent their entire time of residence in their home place before getting their first occupation.

**Urban Income and Rural Property.**

The economic support of urban dwellers is largely provided from urban incomes. However, a substantial part of the low income group have a wife and/or children in their rural homes where they can live off subsistence agriculture (see Table 2).

The situation is reversed with respect to property. I have not met a single urban dweller who did not claim rights to land in his home area. Up to the present Ibo farmland is controlled by the community, i.e. by the lineage—usually the maximal lineage, but sometimes the major or minor lineage (Jones, 1949: 314). Informants both in town and in the village are emphatic that a man does not lose the rights he enjoyed in his home community before he went away, however long he may absent himself. This view is shared by Chubb (1961: 115). The fact seems to be that only the lineage member's claim to some of
the lineage's farmland is maintained, but that land which is not occupied and farmed reverts to the community and can be assigned to other householders in the lineage (Jones, 1949: 314). Thus the emigrant, while his claim to a share in the communal farmland is upheld, is under the constant threat that he may lose his right to a specific piece of land. The recent mass return of Ibo from other parts of Nigeria must have put considerable stress on many rural communities: they all had a recognized claim to land but their original landholdings had in many cases been assigned to others.

House building is the major form of investment. While high returns are available from urban rents it is significant that priority is more frequently given to the rural home. The standard of buildings varies greatly both in the rural areas and—because of minimal building regulations—in town. The aspect of conspicuousness is particularly striking in the impressive rural houses of the upper income group: they are locked up until their owners come on leave; they will be used fully only once the owners retire definitely to their home villages.

Nkem Nwankwo starts his novel *Danda* with a hilarious account of the successful man's visit to his home place, of his arrival in his "land-boat" and his two-storied house, walled round with iron. He has become annoyed with the villagers coming into his house, sometimes still carrying their work dirt, and has had a long shed built and given orders that anybody who wants palm wine should go there. But when challenged he cannot refuse to let a member of his kindred accompany him in his car, come with him into the parlor of his house, drink his Martell.

Conspicuous investment in the home place is then primarily not the establishment of a rural source of economic support. It yields no income, and the security it gives is not so much intrinsic—the returning migrant will be assured of a comfortable place to stay—as

### Table 2. — Economic Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife (wives) living at home</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who have built a house; has built a house at home</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who haven’t built a house; would build first house at home</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%*</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>72%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Husband's home included for female students.
derived: the emigrant secure a respected position in his home community. Building a house at home is the expected expression of the continuing commitment to home, it emphasizes the emigrant’s desire to maintain the home-based part of his social field.

**The Urban Dweller’s Social Field.**

We have noted earlier that the great majority of our population are born in their home place. Many of their relatives and friends continue to live there. They, furthermore, frequently marry a girl from home: they are thus dependent on goodwill in the home community to find a bride, and through their marriage create further affinal ties with the same community. We have already seen that some have their wife and/or children live most of the time in their home place. Where a man has more than one wife it is usual for them to stay in turn with the husband in town, returning to the village when pregnant. The separation of home and work place engendered everywhere by the Industrial Revolution is magnified in their case.

Visits between town and village are frequent in both directions (see Table 3). Most respondents have visited their home place within the last twelve months, the majority visit more frequently than this. While somewhat fewer of their wives have been home during this period, they have stayed there longer. Cases where contact has been completely lost are rare. Information from the village survey confirms this picture. In spite of high rates of emigration 76% of the men and women absent have been in their home place within the last twelve months, 89% within the last three years. The remainder are nearly all living outside Eastern Nigeria, at considerable distances. Still many of them maintain contact by other means, in particular through relatives travelling home.

Visits both from the home place and from people originating from there, but working elsewhere at present, are extremely frequent. Some come for extended periods and expect accommodation and food. The men in the occupational groups were asked about relatives living with them. On the average, every respondent is host to one relative, more frequently related to him rather than to his wife. The majority are at school and the host typically pays their fees: the paying of school fees is made conspicuous by having the beneficiary stay with his Maecenas and do the odd jobs. A second group are declared as apprentices or employees of the interviewee, and they are particularly prominent with traders. Others are unemployed or self-employed.

We may distinguish three categories of people with whom the urban dweller associates outside structural relationships (Mitchell, 1966: 51 f.): the relative, the unrelated villager, the friend who is
neither relative nor villageman. Consanguines, and frequently affines as well, are co-villagers. While they are frequently given direct support, they also benefit from contributions made to communal facilities in the village. The friend on the other hand can be seen as the representative of new links built up outside the traditional context of family and village community. In the urban situation obtaining employment is the crucial issue, the role played by relatives, villagemen, and friends, in either directly providing employment or helping to find employment, is therefore a good indicator of the relative strength of such relationships. Information from open-ended questions on the employment history of the low-income group indicates that in this context help given by relatives holds the first place, support by people from the same home place is also of considerable importance, while the role of friends is less significant (see Table 4).

In fact, the urban dwellers have created new structures based on common origin: the ethnic associations. The frequently used term ‘tribal unions’ is inaccurate in that most of these associations do not represent tribes but much smaller units. The term current in franco-

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**Table 3. — Social Field**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wife (wives) originate(s) from same place</td>
<td>78 %</td>
<td>53 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited home within last 12 months</td>
<td>92 %</td>
<td>91 %</td>
<td>94 %</td>
<td>96 %</td>
<td>82 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent more than one week at home during last visit</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>19 %*</td>
<td>65 %*</td>
<td>55 %*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife visited home within last 12 months</td>
<td>88 %</td>
<td>82 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife spent more than one week at home during last visit</td>
<td>58 %</td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of relatives living with interviewed</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly attending and contributing to an ethnic association</td>
<td>82 %</td>
<td>57 %</td>
<td>24 %**</td>
<td>68 %**</td>
<td>30 %**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office bearer in an ethnic association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of a social club, cultural education or sports organization</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
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</table>

* During last Christmas vacation—this was considerably longer at the Women’s Training College (group C) than at the other two institutions.

** Membership only.
phone countries “associations d’originaires” is more appropriate: the associations are based on common origin from a determined area that may be phrased as village, town, clan, division, or state. They can be called ethnic associations if it is understood that the ethnic group involved can refer to a village of several hundred as well as to a people of several million. The smaller associations are multi-purpose and tend to cover much of the immigrant’s life outside the work situation. Such associations combine to establish formal organizations at higher levels, i.e. standing for more extended home areas. Typically there is a three tiers structure, delegates representing the smaller in the bigger associations.

Ethnic associations are at times referred to as voluntary associations. However they are frequently indispensable for the immigrant’s survival in town in economic as well as psychological terms. Membership then is voluntary only in the sense in which workers have been said to be free to sell their labor. Furthermore, strong norms, underpinned by sanctions, may make membership quasi-compulsory. Associations of Eastern Nigerians claim every ‘son’ of the home community living ‘abroad’, i.e. away from the home community, as a member of his association’s branch in his town of residence. In many cases there is a home branch which attempts to muster people in the home community as well. Most urban dwellers will recognize the claim and the majority attend and contribute regularly (see Table 3).1

Ethnic associations provide essential support for the urban dweller: they give assistance in litigation, illness and death (return of corpse to home place, repatriation of family); they are a channel of information on urban conditions, in particular employment opportunities; they act as arbitrators between members; in special circumstances they may even provide educational facilities in town. Thus the Ibo Northern Regional Union ran two primary and two secondary schools in Northern Nigeria.2

1. Only in this context do women students in fact turn out to be very much less committed than any other group: an unmarried girl knows that on marriage she will be expected to involve herself with her husband’s ethnic association, or rather its women section, not that of her own origin.

2. At the same time many urban residents are members of voluntary asso-
The main concern of these associations is, however, with the affairs of the home community. In Eastern Nigeria decisions on village affairs are taken not so much by the village residents as by co-villagers living in towns. If many an association calls itself ‘Improvement Union’ this refers to the improvement not of urban living conditions but of the home area represented by the association. They transmit new ideas and aspirations, they constitute an urban lobby for village interests, they counsel on village developments, but above all they finance the major part of such developments: the building of roads and bridges, schools, maternity units, in a few instances even secondary schools, hospitals or water supply systems; they offer scholarships, at times with the specific object of providing local staff for the institutions they are establishing.1

In some villages an institution called ‘Mass rally’ has come into existence. This practice was probably started in ‘Furnace town’. Here the emigrant blacksmiths were obliged to return every year. Defaulters were fined; if necessary the fines were collected through the seizure of movable property in their families’ village compounds. Nowadays the enforcement of these rules is fading away. The custom whereby two sets of blacksmiths went in alternate years has been abandoned. However, mass returns to the home village on a specific date have been organized in other places recently. The regular intervals between these meetings vary from two to five years. They usually take place at Christmas time as this provides the longest stretch of public holiday. Return on these occasions is not strongly enforced, though it is said to be compulsory.

During Christmas 1961 we witnessed such ‘Mass rallies’ in two of the villages in our sample. In village A they had been held every two years since 1951, in village B every three years since 1952. In 1961 the entertainments included in both villages ballroom dances—in B an electric plant had been hired for the occasion—and the display of traditional dances and masquerades. A sewing machine, bicycles, radios and a wall clock were the first prizes in raffles. Moreover football and basketball matches were organized in A, and a native of this place, now a civil servant in Lagos, gave a lecture on youth leadership.

In the compounds surveyed 87% of those living ‘abroad’ had returned to B, but only 41% to A. In both places the village was transformed for few days into an attractive center of social activity. New patterns from the town were introduced to the villagers, and the entertainments were expected to yield a profit to be used for develop-

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1. For an account of a particular successful association, see Gugler (1969a, Appendix II).
ment projects in the community. People living throughout the year in different parts of the country met again—and came to know each others' children born in town. The associations used the opportunity to publicize their activities, in particular to the villagers, and to gather support. In B the association drew up a development plan and convened a 'general meeting' of all men.1

Interpretation.

Eastern Nigerians in town live in a dual system: they belong not only to the town they live in, but also to the village they have come from. Evidence of this dual involvement has been given in terms of residence, economic support, and social field. What forces are behind such behavior and attitudes?

The economic factor is the most important variable. For all income groups the attraction of the town is primarily economic. For the low income group it is complemented by an economic attraction of the village. Low income earners find it difficult to support a wife and children in town. The lack of family housing is only one aspect of this. Unless wife and/or children succeed in supplementing the family income from employment, trade or crafts, they have to rely on rural income.

While for many families such rural income is not required to ensure what is considered a subsistence level, it can still be a welcome supplement. It accrues only so long as the family continues to occupy the land; once they leave it, their right to its proceeds lapses; the family hand becomes a family mouth. Land can usually not be bought and sold: abandoning it means foregoing part of the family income without compensation (Elkan and Fallers, 1960: 243 ff.).

Most importantly, the low-income group remains dependent on a rural base for the security it provides at a time when a social security system covering illness, disablement, and old age is in its infancy, and when unemployment compensation is non-existent. As Watson (1958: 193) in his study in North-Eastern Zambia put it: “Mambwe rights to the use of land are their final security.”

The situation is different for high income earners. By national standards their incomes are fantastically high. No member of this new elite expects to be reduced to subsistence agriculture in his old age, the senior civil servants have pension rights on the European pattern.2 High income earners maintaining the village link incur in

1. For a vivid description of celebration and ceremonial activity during the Christmas–New Year period in a coastal town, Opobo, see Plotnicov (1964).
2. In fact the Nigerian tragedy has seen members of this elite fall back on the subsistence the village has to offer.
fact an economic loss. Their gifts to relatives, their contributions to village developments, the cost of their rural houses stand in no proportion to the value of the limited land rights they thus maintain. For a few the village provides a political basis, some find here a ready-made clientele for their business, others may look forward to a time when land will become more easily transferable and their standing in the community will give them an advantage in establishing a major land holding, but the majority are clearly losers in economic terms.\(^1\)

That members of the high-income group maintain their connections with the village is the best demonstration of the importance of the social pull of the village. In fact this social attraction of the rural home is felt in all income groups.\(^2\) The main reason is presumably that the great majority are born and bred in the rural community. Many children of town parents also experience a major part of their early socialization in the village. There is nothing surprising in that individuals should feel attached to members of their extended family and other villagers they have known intimately and conceive of themselves as members of the rural community. Mabogunje (1962: 4) refers to identification when describing such a tendency among Yoruba. A striking description of this attitude has been given by Busia (1950: 73) writing on Ghana:

"A person's membership of his lineage binds him forever to the village where the lineage is localized. Wherever he may go, however long he may be away, he belongs to his lineage town or village. The economic and social obligations of kinship such as those connected with funerals, marriages and divorce, as well as political allegiance and jural rights and status which are also tied up with kinship, keep alive his attachment to his native town or village."

The correlate of this is that urban residents continue to care about the opinion people back home hold of them. Whoever can afford it will not fail to enhance his prestige by building a house in his home village. It will demonstrate his success, that he is not a 'useless man'. The presence of this house displaying his achievement will perhaps

\(^1\) To the extent that politicians rely on an ethnically circumscribed base, and distribute patronage on the same lines, other elite members dependent on them, and this can apply to civil servants seeking promotion, may be induced to emphasize their ethnic affiliation (Lloyd, 1966: 333 f.).

\(^2\) It should be noted that a major source of strain between the urban dweller and the rural community he came from is absent in Eastern Nigeria. Elsewhere in West Africa cases of elders resisting vehemently the emigration of young people have been observed (Banton, 1957: 48 ff.; Mercier, 1954: 157), leaving secretly is a recurrent pattern (Rouch, 1956: 78; Skinner, 1965: 67). In Eastern Nigeria, in 1961, no opposition against the widespread movement to the towns could be traced in any of the rural communities visited, only a very few instances were mentioned of such resistance occurring in the early 1920s. The search for an occupation outside the community was accepted as the avenue to success.
be most important the day he is brought home to be buried in his compound according to custom.¹

The prestige to be gained in the village makes the relationship particularly gratifying to the new urban elite. In town they associate with equals. Most have joined the elite only recently and still feel insecure when faced with the demands of longer established members of the elite. But in the village context their success is overwhelming and recognized as such. Jackson (1956: 85) reports that he came frequently across rural leaders who, at the request of their community, had given up lucrative employment and returned to their own villages to act as leaders, and who almost invariably became members of local government councils in their area. Many play a role very similar to that of a man prominent in the traditional context. Like their traditional counterpart they adopt the conspicuous spending pattern expected of the wealthy. They display their wealth in a house and a car, they compete with each other in their generosity to individuals and for communal undertakings, their standing gains its most vivid expression in the number of dependents who gather around them. When they acquire the traditional status symbol by joining a title society, the attainment of rural status through urban achievement is sealed.²

Given the social attraction of the village some of the high-income earner’s heavy expenditure there is dictated by his own convenience. Since he continues to visit the village and in the majority of cases intends to retire there eventually, he wants the amenities he is used to in town in the village as well. Many senior civil servants spend most of their vacation in the village in spite of discomfort. But they rapidly build comfortable houses and are preoccupied with plans to extend urban services to the villages. Village improvements are thus directly relevant to themselves: they expect to enjoy them.

Most urban dwellers thus identify with a rural home, feel that they belong there, reaffirm their allegiance. They define their home as familiar and friendly, at the same time they continue to perceive their urban environment as alien, and to emphasize its hostility. They derive emotional security from the firm roots they maintain in their place of origin while settling down for a working life in town. This

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1. The disgrace in death of not having a proper house at home—for sympathizers to admire, for mourners to shelter—is brought out in Agunwa’s novel More than Once (1967).
2. Transfer of income to the extended family and the village presumably does not constitute a brake on individual performance so long as it is perceived as an effective means of reaching an internalized goal: the progress of the extended family and the home community and/or the achievement of a desired status position in the rural community. All too frequently income redistribution is discussed with the implicit assumption that the individual income earner is only concerned with his nuclear family.
commitment to the community of origin is usually supported by an ideology of loyalty to ‘home’. The strength of this ideology derives partly from the fact that it will not be questioned by the great majority for whom such loyalty is an economic necessity anyway. The deviant is thus frequently faced with a majority of the people from his area of origin upholding this ideology and bringing pressures to bear on him. The man who has not visited his home for some time will be urged to do so by other immigrants from there and by their association. He may even see a delegation arrive from his village urging him to return. Destitute women have been known to be repatriated against their will.

Van Velsen (1963: 40), following Mitchell’s (1959: 32) use of Durkheim’s distinction between the rate and the incidence of suicide, has argued that in the movement from town to village the social relationships are more likely to be a factor which determines the incidence of such return migration, whilst its rate is determined by the economic factor of the lack of security in the towns and the expectation of security in the home areas. It is correct that for most urban dwellers in Eastern Nigeria social ties are intertwined with economic ties. The example of this majority to some extent influences the behavior of the few who are not constrained by economic considerations. It would, however, seem more precise to conceive of the social pull of the rural areas as concurrent with their economic pull, this social pull being the only effective factor with certain economically secure categories.

The Comparative Perspective.

That urban immigrants should retain links with relatives who stayed behind in rural areas is not surprising and has in fact been reported from many areas. The importance of urban-rural ties in Eastern Nigeria is, however, exceptional. The salient difference with urban-rural relationships elsewhere is that considerable economic resources are transferred to the rural areas: to help not only close relatives but also the entire village community, to be displayed in conspicuous investment.

The same economic insecurity is experienced by urban low-income earners throughout Subsaharan Africa. But there appears to be considerable variation on the subcontinent both in terms of the contribution made to rural development by urban dwellers who ultimately rely on the security the rural areas provide, and in terms of the rural commitment of an urban elite who no longer require such security.¹

¹ A major survey covering the whole of Ghana in 1963 found that very few of the migrants regarded their migration as something permanent. Four-fifths were quite clear that they ultimately intended to return to the village. Only
I will suggest some of the factors to be taken into account in an explanation of these variations. The most important is perhaps the control the rural community exerts over land. In Eastern Nigeria land is typically both scarce and tightly controlled by localized lineages. In many parts of Subsaharan Africa land is more easily available, elsewhere control is more individualized or has even become transferable to strangers de facto if not de jure. Increasing scarcity would in fact appear to foster individualization of control and to bring land into the market place.

This, then, leads to the consideration of a related factor: the cohesion of the rural community. Settlement in Eastern Nigeria is in compact villages, where political control was traditionally limited to the village group, and the members of the village claimed a common ancestor: as a rule all agnates would live within the village, affines not far away. While differential status could be achieved, it did not create a barrier, though a minority were relegated to the position of slaves. In other parts of Subsaharan Africa, settlement is dispersed; political control in pre-colonial days frequently stretched beyond the village horizon, and stratification in such societies was more marked.1

A further factor to be taken into account concerns the degree of rural development. Compared to most of Subsaharan Africa much of Eastern Nigeria is well developed. The gap between urbanites and ruralites is thus reduced. Communication with an educated villager is easier. Stay in village equipped with basic amenities is less strenuous, retirement there a more attractive prospect. In fact an eighth of all migrants returned home less frequently than once a year. The usual number of visits was one to three, although visits to the north of the country tended to be more infrequent. It was estimated that migrants transferred 3% of the national income to rural areas, that about one-tenth of the income earned in Accra found its way out of the city and that most of this went to rural Ghana (Caldwell, 1967: 141 ff.).

On the other hand, in the Congo, in the early fifties, living in what was then Stanleyville was often seen as a welcome refuge from hardships and difficulties in the village. It offered an escape from the harsh authority of chiefs, from sorcery, from drudgery of work in the fields, from obligations to demanding kinsmen and from the hostilities and jealousies of the village. Even number of those who stressed attractive aspects of life in the village also explained that, despite the advantages, a return home would involve them in intolerable situations. They considered that after a man had been accustomed to Western ways it was impossible later to accommodate to the ‘uncivilized’ ways of village people who were said to be distrustful and jealous of those who had ‘followed the Europeans’ (Pons, 1969: 51).

1. Elkan (1960: 137 f.) has noted that the English towns of the last century drew their populations not from small peasant farmers but very largely from agricultural laborers who owned no land and were already dependent on wages before they entered the industrial labor force. This leads to the consideration that social relations in the rural communities these landless laborers came from, must have been very different from the strongly integrated pattern of most traditional African communities.
rural development and the maintenance of urban-rural ties can be mutually reinforcing processes: if rural development encourages emigrants to maintain ties, they in turn further the development of the village through their advice and the transfer of economic resources.

A fourth factor finally concerns the ease of communication between town of residence and area of origin. It is a function both of distance and of the modes of communication available, in terms of the existing infrastructure and of the emigrant's means to use them. Both in West Africa and in the South many migrants used to move over thousands of miles. Most nevertheless managed to return home after longer or shorter periods sooner or later.\(^1\) Over the last two decades distance has become much less of an obstacle as motorized transport became accessible to most.\(^2\) More recently long distance migration has been severely curtailed: after Independence, and with growing urban unemployment, there is the tendency to reserve work opportunities for nationals, to bar foreigners.

We seem to have eschewed the urban side of the picture. In fact Eastern Nigerians maintain strong urban-rural links even though they were comparatively secure in the urban setting even in colonial days. The Ibo in particular have made a reputation as an ethnic group as to their success in the urban arena. However Mayer's (1961: 230 ff.) study of a South African town is there to remind us that the welcome the immigrant receives in town can be a crucial factor. He describes a population, the school Xhosa, who have become adaptable to urban conditions through the cultural preparation by school and church, and the reception of many Western values. But a policy which is designed to prevent urbanization and integration has achieved its aim in so far as not many of them nowadays feel secure in town.

We might be tempted to speculate about the future of the pattern we found in Eastern Nigeria in 1961. We could contemplate the possibilities of change in the underlying forces considered in our interpretation. We could compare the responses of different occupational groups, contrast them with the reaction of different student populations. Or we might try to evaluate the implications of such a pattern

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1. Caldwell (1967: 118) reports from a survey of migrants from Southern Togo and Southern Nigeria in Ghana that only one immigrant in every eighteen intended to live his life out in Ghana. He suggests, however, that the large number of old migrants recorded by the Census indicates perhaps that a majority failed to return home. Although most immigrants felt that they should go back to their homelands for periodic visits, the majority of Nigerian immigrants had never managed to make a single return visit.

2. Rouch (1956: 80) notes that since World War II transport facilities have made it possible for migrants to Ghana to have two domiciles: one in Ghana, the other in their home area, up to 1,000 miles away.
for economic development. But this is not the time as we watch helplessly the tragedy that has befallen the country whose hospitality we so much enjoyed.

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