Migration and the Decline of a Densely Populated Rural Area: The Case of Vo Koutime in South-East Togo[1])

by E. le Bris

An initial and continuing concern in our study of the population unit of Vo Koutime in south-east Togo has been the attempt to analyse the meaning of migration. We began with the idea put forward by J. P. Dozon (1977) that migrants constitute a 'non-institutionalized counterpart' of the resident village population. It is impossible to understand the process of social reproduction in the 'departure' community without considering both these groups together. The ubiquity of this feature in many African societies forms what J. L. Amselle (1976) calls the 'migratory network' (relations of various kinds established between the migrant and his departure community). In the case of south-east Togo it was tempting to connect the development of strong demographic pressure with gradual separation of workers from their means of production in the departure zone (what J. L. Amselle terms the 'migratory process'). After a brief description of the Togolese area under study we shall attemp to show, by tracing the history of population growth in the south-east, that there is no automatic connection between demographic pressure and development of migration. We then attempt to define the mechanisms of domination by the capitalist mode of production in the Ouatchi social formation and to adumbrate the way in which migration itself affects the social formation.

1. THE OUATCHI REGION OF SOUTH-EAST TOGO

The population unit of Vo Koutime may be analysed on three levels:

— As an integral part of the Ouatchi people i.e. an ethnic group of some 300,000 peasants placed almost immediately after settlement in a domination-extortion relation to the slave trade.

— Located within a very small area of Togo (covering 2.5% of the total area of the country) and comprising a large population (15% of the national total) under the jurisdiction of the Togolese state. It is on this second level that constraints stemming from imperialist exploitation are most clearly expressed.

— Closely linked to the river area of the Benin Gulf itself marked by both the crushing influence of three centralized kingdoms (Oyo, Abomey, Ashanti) and particular virulence of the slave trade. This coastal region is today characterized by high population densities, strong urbanization by African standards and political fragmentation as a result of colonization and inter-European rivalry.

1.1. *Brief history of demographic growth*

Large numbers of people converged on the south-east of present-day Togo between the late sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries at a time when the decline

[1]) Translated into English by Mrs. Siân Snyder.

of the great Sudanese states and development of the slave trade brought about enormous shifts in population distribution. There is still debate concerning the probable nature of the area's occupation before the sixteenth century but it seems likely that this fertile land covered according to tradition by sparse forest was inhabited by a gathering population. This probably small population was rapidly assimilated by newer arrivals having two main branches: on the one hand coastal populations coming from the west and on the other, the huge migratory population coming from Oyo in present-day Nigeria and passing through Keton, Tado and Notse (Nuatja) (Pazzi 1973).

A fairly large population from Tado settled at Notse in a belt which impressed the first European explorers by its size. The buffer-kingdom of Notse disappeared to all intents and purposes at the end of the sixteenth century with the collapse of the Songhai empire. The dispersal of these populations was also hastened no doubt by the presence along the coast of the first Europeans. Groups of Eve, numerically the most important, moved towards the mountains west of Notse. A separate branch, the Ouatchi colonized at various stages the fertile red clay land south of the royal capital. No fewer than a dozen migratory routes were set up by this branch alone, taking the form of both concentrations (the villages of Tchekpo, Akoumape and Vogan) and fissions (importance of the role of hunter-scout). In the course of their travels, the Ouatchi came into contact with the Gan along a line marked today by the heavily populated concentrations of Badougbe, Anfoin and Aklakow.

The Gan, who came originally from the Accra area, were conquered in 1660 by the Akwamu and emigrated *en masse* eastwards, taking with them some Anlo from Keta. The first groups reached Glidji in 1687. It is obviously impossible to guess the size of these contingents all converging on the south-east in less than two centuries, and the rate of population growth can only be inferred (by extension of the Notse belt, extent of forest clearance in the south-east, etc.).

Slave ships plying between El Mina and Benin City gave a wide berth to this reputedly unfriendly coast where the likelihood of meeting sizeable politically structured groups was remote. During the eighteenth century (with the establishment in 1671 of the fort at Ouidah and development of the ports of Grand Popo, Petit Popo, Agoué and Porto Seguro) this situation changed radically. Hopes of fortunes to be made swelled the Gan-Anlo migratory flow by the addition of the Fanti of El Mina. The growth of Aného (Petit Popo) indicates the rapidity of demographic accumulation; the town soon comprised 16 wards and spilled over into the land north of the lagoon. Substantial settlements of slaves increased this growth still further and it is satisfactorily established that two Nago slaves, Fon and Kabyé founded a large number of hamlets in the Aného area. And lastly, at the end of the 18th century, ex-slaves reputedly returned from Brazil and Sierra Leone (the 'Brazilians' and the 'Saloto') settled at Agoué and at Aného.

1.2. *Development of productive activities and mechanisms of social reproduction*

The Ouatchi have maintained agricultural traditions acquired at Tado and for a long time retained the successful partnership traditionally existing between smithing and agricultural work. This agriculture, while highly valued and fairly well organized (rôle of Anyigba fio, king of the land) used rudimentary techno-

logy; yams were probably the basic food. Politically speaking, these farming populations were very poorly organized (one hears of Ouatchi 'anarchies'). However the coastal groups (present-day Mina) were politically highly structured; in order to reach Glidji, they had had to conduct wars against the Anlo and the Eve. With development of the slave trade they were forced to act as middlemen for the Europeans and to supply the heavy demand for food products created along the coast and in the lower Mono valley. The Ouatchi provided a perfect source of supply and quickly fell under the domination of warrior dynasties of the coast. These Gan and Tougban dynasties, themselves dependent on the Abomey kingdom, began to decline just as their expeditions increased their wealth. As they were compelled to provide constantly increasing numbers of slaves, so these 'condottiere', because of their violence, hindered the effective operation of their own commercial network. Indeed, traders replaced warriors in the second half of the eighteenth century. The 'Brazilians' and 'Saloto', a marginal group 'parachuted in' as it were, took control over the mechanisms of social reproduction and brought about the unification of the south-eastern societies in a way no previous authority had managed to do.

The commercial system developed by these large-scale traders maintained a connection between themselves and the peasant masses (a connection guaranteed by the presence of women in the markets). The declining trade in men was gradually replaced by trade in products. The large-scale traders who had become great landowners controlled settlement of raided slaves and, drawing primarily on Ouatchi sources, organized a highly active agricultural wage labour market. The mechanisms of social reproduction began to revolve around land. Harvesting of agricultural products and distribution of European mechandise was guaranteed by the creation of a closely-knit network of rural markets also controlled by large-scale traders (Le Bris 1977). Imperialist trade dominated by the 'Brazilians' passed apparently smoothly into the hands of large European commercial firms. It will be seen, however, that in the space of a quarter-century, rules governing the workings of local society were to undergo radical change.

2. POPULATION GROWTH, OVERPOPULATION AND MIGRATION

2.1. *Population statistics*

The population of the South-East was undoubtedly larger than the 60,000 inhabitants suggested by the Germans at the beginning of the century, and its distribution undoubtedly different from the distribution as found today: the lower Mono valley was densely populated and the contemporary district of Tablogbo practically empty. In 1937-38, in a population of 140,000 inhabitants, the average gross density of the region was 35 (with maximal instances of 120 inhabitants to the square kilometre). After the war (1950), population figures show 185,000 inhabitants with total strength stabilizing between 1945 and 1955 (when there was a rush to neighbouring English-speaking countries as a result of the 1945 opening up of frontiers).

A sharp increase apparent after independence was reflected in the 1970 census figures in which the three circonscriptions of Aného, Tabligbo and Vo comprise 325,000 inhabitants and average gross density had increased to 120 with isolated instances of more than 300 inhabitants per square kilometre! To

what extent are these figures comparable? A coefficient of error of between 7% and 9% is generally admitted necessary to offset the underestimation of colonial censuses; we have good reason to believe that the census figures of 1970 for the South-East are underestimated. Despite all reservations however, there has been spectacular growth and periods within which the population has doubled are progressively shortened (from 35 years during the inter-war years to less than 30 today). Even taking into account the loss of population through migration, there appears to have been considerable natural growth due no doubt to reduced mortality rates. (It is worth noting however that although the neo-natal mortality rate has clearly declined, the decline in infant mortality is not so significant.) The birth rate on the other hand remains very high if the 1961 post-census study is accurate.

The increase in population density places south-eastern Togo today among the most densely populated areas of West Africa (palm groves of Porto Novo, South-West of Nigeria). These gross figures take little account of distribution. First it should be remembered that the figures in question concern almost exclusively rural populations (Aného and Vogan are alone large enough to be called towns, yet they represent a mere 7% of the total population of the three *'circonscriptions'* in 1970). Even within such a small region there are great disparities in population density. Demographic 'gradients' are undoubtedly significant and one might logically expect some adjustments in distribution if migratory movements obeyed the laws of communicating vessels. Why is the Mono valley, so active and busy less than a century ago now bereft of a large part of its population? Why have peasants not begun to work the fertile clay soil of the Lama basin and the Haho valley? To these must be added the further controversial question as to whether demographic growth brought about an intensification of agriculture and technical innovation.

2.2. *Some theoretical considerations concerning 'overpopulation'*

It might be useful at this juncture to return to theory. Scientific methods of dealing with the problems of population leave much to be desired. Geographers for example, while laying special stress on the distribution of population, disagree about the extent of its importance. For Gourou (1971:125), geographic problems may be most fruitfully addressed by beginning with the notion of population density and the various means of expressing it. P. Georges (1966:85f) however suggests that on the contrary, 'population density is only a measure of the greater or lesser concentration of population, from which no a priori qualitative conclusions can be drawn. A geometric unit of surface area is not the defining factor of a level or a potential of sustenance . . .' Nevertheless the old belief in the concrete is still held by many geographers.

Marx shows clearly that population, the basis and subject of the social act of production, should be at the starting point of scientific study but he adds that 'population is an abstraction if one omits, for example, the classes of which it is composed . . . ' Thus if one were to begin with the idea of a socially undifferentiated population, one would end up with a chaotic representation; from there the journey would have to be retraced until one arrived at a conception of population as a rich totality of many determinants and relations (Marx 1963: 255f).

The arguments against Malthusians and neo-Malthusians are well-known: over-population is not the same during different historical phases of development, there is no automatic relation between the number of people and the general quantity of subsistence potential. Indeed, some purportedly anti-Malthusian writers are not entirely invulnerable to such criticism themselves (Boserup 1970) by failing still to take into consideration social relations linking the individual to the means of his reproduction.

The basic idea is as follows: 'Different laws governing the growth of population and overpopulation correspond to different modes of social production'. Drawing examples from different historical periods (hunting peoples, ancient Greece, medieval Europe) Marx shows that the notion of a global mass dissociated from means of subsistence is misleading; a 'population surplus' relates not to means of subsistence as such but to the way they are produced. 'The discovery of surplus-labour, that is, men of no property whatsoever dates only from the capitalist era'. Marx extends the analysis still further by establishing a parallel between pauperism and overpopulation. 'The concept of the free worker' he goes on to say 'carries with it the implication that the worker is virtually a destitute pauper . . .' This analysis is particularly illuminating when applied to rural African youth arriving in the city. They have a variety of needs which their position in the labour force prevents them from meeting. Production based on capital is in fact brought about by increasing recourse to surplus as necessary labour becomes increasingly available. 'Over-population develops parrallel to surplus labour'. In rural milieux, integration into the world capitalist system means the breaking down of relations between isolated individuals or entire groups and their conditions of production and reproduction. 'The breaking down of these relations results in the exclusion of individuals (as overpopulation) from the process of reproduction; they become not only poverty-stricken but also incapable of acquiring means of subsistence through labour, that is destitute'.

How is integration into the capitalist system actually brought about? Are some individuals affected more than others by the 'push-effect'? Is there a point at which the latter becomes self-perpetuating? Before attempting a partial answer to these questions we present an historical sketch of modern migration in south-east Togo.

2.3. *Historical account of modern migration in south-east Togo*

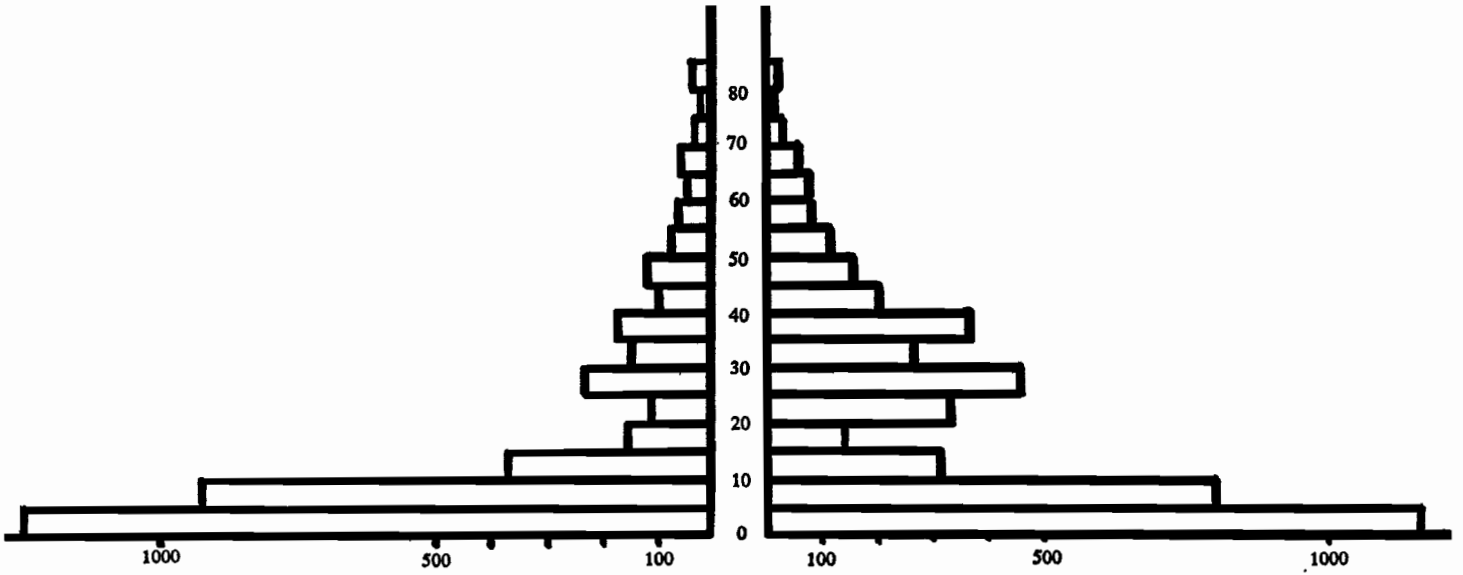
It would be foolish to claim that mobility in south-east Togo was only recently created. Nevertheless the old migrations we have mentioned bear very little relation to so-called modern migration; the latter, unlike the former has led to a depletion of population. This type of migration was unknown before World War I and developed on a massive scale only after 1935-40, despite the fact that after 1935 reports sent by the French administration to the League of Nations attempted to minimise the departure rate in order, no doubt, to emphasize the success of the *Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance*. Kuczynski (1939) shows that between 1931 and 1937, 7.4% of men (about 5,000 persons) and 1.7% of women (a little over 1,000 persons) left the *cercle* of Aného. During the same time the relative number of 'children' increased by 12%. It is apparently during this period that labour migration from the South-East reached massive proportions. Just before independence the *Comptes Economiques du Togo* indicated a total of

20,000 persons or 11% of the population of the *Cercle*, migrating from the *cercle* of Aného. This figure is lower than the departure rates of other *cercles* (Kara: 16%, Bassari and Tsévié: 15%). These flows were still basically associated with 'the development of export-oriented plantation zones' (Amin 1974): nearly 90% of migrants moved to the cocoaproducing areas of Togo (Litimé) and especially to Ghana (Eastern Region and Ashanti Region). The boom which characterized the cocoa economy of the Gold Coast occurred between 1890 and 1914 but only after World War I, when private ownership of land came into being, did availability of a wage-labour force become a condition for the functioning of the system.

Togo (and south Togo in particular) has long been a source of mobile qualified labour. Eve were second only to Dahomeyans among the employees of the French administration in former A.O.F. (French West Africa). Similarly, the movement between Accra and Lagos of Mina women traders operating on a large scale dates from several decades ago. But these movements were small in comparison to migrations of young poorly-qualified labour. After independence, the drain was constant and grew worse as it changed in character. Although agricultural migration did not by any means end, today the flow is heavily urban-oriented. Migration has lost its seasonal character and become permanent. And finally, young migrants cross national frontiers increasingly often despite (or because of) the balkanization of that part of Africa. We may stress at this point that in migration, measurement of distance travelled in geographic terms has hardly any significance. For the Ouatchi, crossing a frontier may mean moving only a few kilometres but the distinction between national and foreign status has today become an important hindering factor. In the case of Togolese living in Ghana, several factors must be taken into consideration: 1. increasingly strict requirements concerning proof of nationality (identity papers, passports); 2. massive expulsion of foreigners in 1969 and frequent threats of expulsion since that time; 3. speculation on Ghanaian money the exchange value of which completely collapsed in recent years. Its fall in value as compared to the C.F.A. franc, whatever its effects on the Ghanaian economy, represented an enormous handicap to francophone residents of the country wishing to return to their home communities.

The age pyramid for Vo Koutime provides evidence of certain characteristics of the migrant population. Generally speaking, more men than women leave (about 60% of men) but it is worth noting that women leave at an earlier age (three-quarters of the departures of women take place before the age of 20, and especially before the age of 15) and in many cases return to their original village. The vast majority of departure of men takes place between the ages of 15 and 25; imbalances occurring up to age 45 suggest that very few ever return. Personal investigation in towns gives equally significant results despite a substantial underestimation of women (only women heads of family having lived in town for a number of years were included). Provisional interpretation of our enquiries in Lomé show that 86% of male migrants were aged less than twenty-one. The Vo Koutime colony in Accra certainly includes older individuals, nevertheless heads of family aged under thirty still represent nearly 40% of the sample and 43.5% of the total population of migrants' families are less than 15 years old.

Figure 1: Age pyramid, Vo Koutime



(left-hand side: males; right-hand side: females)

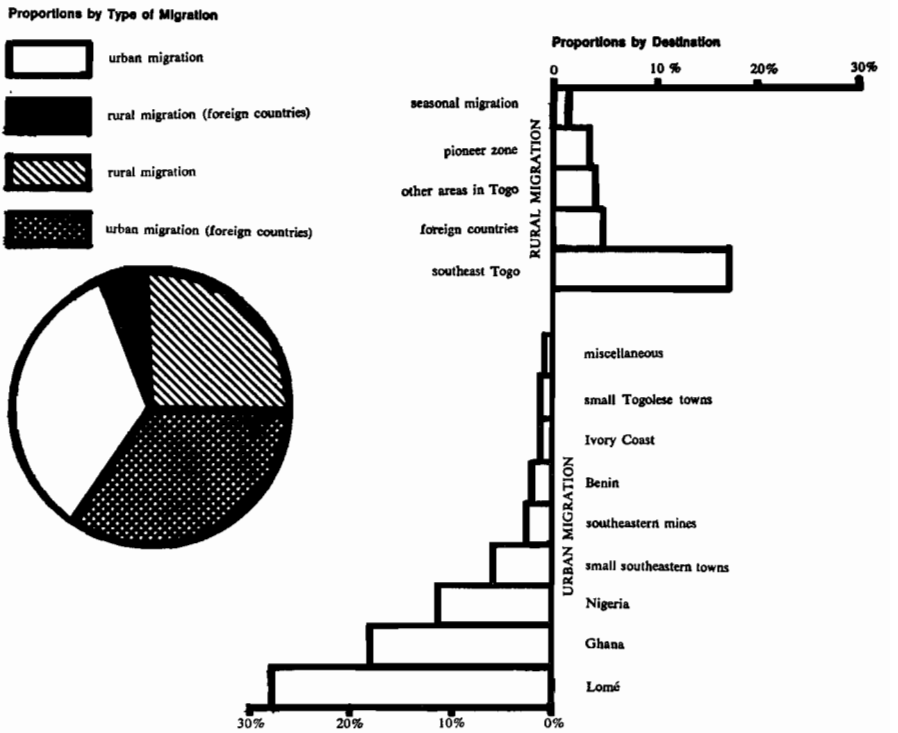
Source: 1970 census.

Very rarely does movement to large capitals date as far back as the second generation (1.1% heads of family born in Lomé and 4.4% born in Accra). In fact the first settlements in Accra as well as in the Togolese capital, occurred after 1920. Doubtless more movement occurred in the inter-war period but the great increase after World War II is as clearly evident in both cases. Migration to the Ghanaian capital rose suddenly after Togolese independence. The coincidence between year of departure from Vo Koutime and year of arrival in town shows clearly an absence of migratory stop-over; and in the same way migrants most often move directly to Accra without stopping over in Lomé.

What are the most common migratory patterns at present? In our initial studies on Vo Koutime we used a classic typology which contrasted agricultural with urban migration, labour migration with 'social' mobility (e.q. marriages), spontaneous migration with controlled migration etc. This kind of classification was soon shown to be inadequate. For example the criterion of duration (long term-short term) is of limited use when taking into account the periodic return home of villagers for varying lengths of time. The rural-urban distinction is equally unsatisfactory considering that a substantial number of migrants moving to towns are engaged in agricultural activities part-time or full-time. In addition, 'permanent agricultural migration to foreign countries more closely resembles urban-oriented labour migration than agricultural migration towards pioneer zones'. This lends substance to a fundamental criticism neatly summed up by M. Castells (1970:1162): 'The elusiveness of empirical criteria with which to define "urban" is only the expression of a theoretical vacuum. Such theoretical ambiguity is an ideological necessity in translating the myth of modernity into concrete terms'.

To extrapolate (abeit roughly) from official sources and our own investigations, the figure emerges of 100,000 to 120,000 persons born in south-east Togo now living outside that area (in 1970 the three administrative *circonscriptions* of the South-East were made up of 325,000 individuals). Diagram 2 shows migratory patterns for the administrative unit of Vo Koutime. Internal agricultural migration is low and in fact disappearing. Internal migration connotes migration of which the points of departure and destination are situated within the same geographical area, in our case, within the three '*circonscriptions*' of south-east Togo. This kind of migration is particularly interesting (Le Bris 1976) in that it demonstrates the importance of social dynamics in the departure zone and shows how new social relations are established (particularly in pioneer zones). External agricultural migration has today lost almost entirely its seasonal character; it is long-term labour migration resembling in many respects migration to towns. M. Castells' point can be illustrated by the difficulty of distinguishing between rural and urban which exists in the peri-urban (or semi-rural) conglomerations which have sprung up west of Accra (Sukula, Russia, Odordor, Darkuma etc.) and east of Lomé (Akodessewa, Klovikondji). Non-agricultural internal migration is negligible. Large boroughs such as Vogan and Tabligbo undoubtedly include a considerable school-age population but these young people return every week, if not every evening, to their villages; and once their schooldays are over, they frequently have no alternative but to return to the family home and wait for some hypothetical job as school monitor or temporary clerk in a local worksite. The two big industrial concerns of the South-East (the phosphate factory and manioc starch plant) are by no means poles of attraction. External non-agricultural migration is infinitely more important. Though medium-size Togolese towns

Figure 2: Patterns of migration from Vo Koutime



receive hardly any Ouatchi migrants, Lomé receives an annual five thousand individuals coming from the coastal region and in 1970, 17.3% of the population of the capital came from this area. However, in many cases, Lomé represents a retreat or waiting-station after attempted migration to Accra or Lagos. The following table gives a good idea of the contrast between small francophone capitals and large English-speaking metropoles:

Table 1. Urban growth in four West-African towns

	1920	1950		1966	
Lagos	100,000	230,000		675,000	(1963)
Accra	38,000	135,000		634,000	(with Tema)
Lomé	10,000	32,000		90,000	
Cotonou	—	54,000	(1956)	120,000	

3. FORMS OF INTEGRATION INTO THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION IN SOUTH-EAST TOGO

3.1. *Stagnation of petty-commodity production*

The problem of articulation of modes of production is so complex that the following analysis may well become obsolete in the light of future findings. We have attemped to isolate the most significant developments.

Ever since the beginning of the century, peasant masses have found themselves in direct confrontation with the laws of the world market (news of the price of maize at the Hamburg exchange is eagerly awaited at Aného). German penetration in the area was complicated. At first it seemed likely that a capitalist-type plantation economy based on palm-oil and coconut production would be implanted upon the area; however rates for these kinds of products began to fall from 1885 and with the change in European demand, it was the cocoa plantations of the Gold Coast which began large-scale export production. At the same time, large European commercial firms ousted the 'Brazilians' from their trading position and created a staggering growth in import of goods manufactured in the metropolis; the old local banks fell into ruin, the old commercial routes (Mono valley) were abandoned; the few trading-stations boldly established in the interior (two of which were at Vo Koutime) and small-scale Mina shopkeepers of Aného and Glidji retreated to the coast during the inter-war years. Sons of the former ruling class, with the accumulated wealth of a century, moved *en masse* to the towns. The ball was now in the court of the Ouatchi, who were at last given the opportunity of throwing off the yoke of secular authority: however, looking at the present situation, it is clear that only a few individuals who either enjoyed some political power or received a veteran's pension managed to develop forms of agrarian capitalism through mobilization of sufficient land and labour. The Ouatchi's 'big chance' came a great deal too late in the game! From the beginning of the century, annual double harvests of maize were normal and mixed maize-manioc farming covered large areas of land. Palm tree exploitation, previously carried out for palm-oil extraction in the Mono valley was stepped up in the plateau after 1920, this time for distillation of palm wine. Fairly rapidly there developed an agriculture which was uninterrupted but no more intensive, and after World War II the veritable 'mining' of the red clay land began (by this we mean the engagement of several thousand peasants to furnish manioc for the manioc starch plant). The result was swift in coming; local agricultural productivity collapsed (at least in the southern half of the area) and labour time necessary for the simple reproduction of the labour force increased considerably. Under these conditions, it becomes increasingly difficult to extract a surplus; moreover the peasants prefer to play safe by maintaining a mixed agriculture based on the one hand on the growth of maize and manioc (*gari* or manioc flour may be used as food substitute should the maize crop fail) and on the other hand, gathering activities; felling of young palm trees for extraction of wine from which an alcohol (*sodabi*) may be obtained, is a rich source of income. Under these conditions it is hardly surprising that *petty-commodity production* such as that initiated half a century ago in south-east Togo has hardly developed at all. The reasons for this failure to develop may be analysed on four levels (Le Bris 1977b):

1. 'Resistance behaviour patterns' with regard to agricultural systems (palm-tree and associated culture) and slow adoption of innovative techniques (valley lowlands are not cultivated);

2. Fragmented land ownership, despite the fact that land is rarely considered a commodity. Landholding practices are very rigid; the most common form of transfer apart from inheritance is pledge (*awoba*) but it is notable that in such cases it is the landowner who finds himself in a weak position (he alienates himself from his land in order to settle a debt).

3. Forms of mobilization of the labour force often still derive from pre-capitalist modes of production (such as pledging of persons for debts). Though wage labour has existed for several decades, the agricultural labour market is particularly tight and subject to large seasonal variation. (At Vo Koutime, 39% of agricultural heads of production units regularly used wage-labour and 43% were employed themselves as wage-labourers).

4. The level of technology has remained the same for a century. Elementary fertilizing techniques are unknown and other agricultural techniques (earthing up and multiple-hoeing) are falling rapidly into disuse. The use of hybrid seed is rare and the sparse sowing that occurs is undertaken in the most haphazard and unselective way. Manioc cuttings are systematically taken from old plants and clone degeneration is advanced; there is an increase in the number of conflicts created by theft of cuttings and it is quite possible that eventually the South-East will suffer general impoverishment in this domain.

Within the framework of this stagnant petty commodity production, spatial units have tended to become smaller and more atomized. The average size of a Vo Koutime holding is approximately 16,000 square metres; one third of the land parcels worked during this study were less than 2,000 square metres large. The village chief and his ward representatives normally exercise the prerogatives of the old chief of the land but their authority is merely nominal; is it at the level of the family or even of the individual that real authority in land holding is exercised. Finally Vo Koutime - Zooti, the village unit which historically constituted a unified whole, has today been split into at least five units, relations of each of which to the original mother-cell are very loose, if not actually hostile. A 'fragmented space' has been produced by the slow dissolution of petty-commodity production.

The capitalist mode of production has not penetrated all aspects of agricultural production in south-east Togo. In fact it seems possible that a mode of production may dominate previous modes of production without bringing about *ipso facto* their dissolution. Petty commodity production which prevails in the region under study is related in a complex way to the dominant capitalist mode of production. Within the framework of an integrated economic space stretching well beyond Togolese frontiers, the south-east fulfils a dual purpose. First it supplies urban markets with low-priced foodstuffs. It is therefore understandable in these conditions that after the ousting of large-scale 'Brazilian' traders, female large-scale foodsellers were alone in adopting very intelligently to new conditions of commercial life. Secondly, it supplies towns with cheap labour, not only for capitalist

manufacturing or commercial activities but also for the dependent sector of craft production and services.

3.2. *Migratory pressures and impoverishment of departure zone*

Conditions under which migratory 'push-effects' develop are as follows: a stagnant mode of production subject to the aims assigned to it by a capitalist mode of production and incapable of fully mobilizing available labour; impoverishment of land (by palm trees or decline in soil fertility); a State subject to external constraints (ever-increasing export in order to earn funds which assure the continued survival of the political class), and therefore incapable of making necessary investments (development of the valleys, the opening up of an authentic pioneer zone in the North, real policy of technical improvement: Le Bris 1977c). The 'push-effects' in turn deprive the departure zone of people, money and products and rupture the essential balance at the level of the production unit. It seems abundantly clear that in south-east Togo, once a certain threshold is reached, migration becomes self-perpetuating.

Using the case of Vo Koutime, we should like to illustrate certain hypotheses on the demographic effects of migration, disorganization of productive activities and the draining of money and products away from the departure zone.

3.2.1. *Demographic effects*

As we have seen, rural depopulation deprives the departure community of an important part of its active age population; this is clearly reflected in the age-pyramid; it is equally discernible from the tax-register kept by the village chief of Vo Koutime. Even taking into account the (usually short-term) return of those expelled from Ghana in 1969, and changes in administrative boundaries which took away some hamlets from the chief's authority in 1972, an undeniable loss in twenty years of some 28% of the taxable population shows the extent of the drain. Out of 42 farms and hamlets, only three cases show an increase of taxable individuals. Our own study indicates that the composition of more than 40% of farming units show serious imbalances of sex and age; 16% of these will almost certainly have disappeared by the next generation. The present preponderance of women, elderly and children in village populations has brought about changes in the organization of production which we shall now examine. A logical consequence of the nature of mobility is to postpone the age at which people first marry, to increase matrimonial instability and at the very least to increase periods of separation of spouses. All this obviously tends to lower the fertility rate. Nevertheless similarities exist in marriage patterns in both town and country. In rural milieux, difficulties (particularly in raising dowry) are such that polygamy wanes. The percentage of polygamists having two wives remains however markedly higher in the rural departure district (33%) than in groups of migrants at Lomé (26%) and Accra (27%). It is worth noting in passing that in Accra 66% of women married by men from Vo Koutime come from the departure village.

All of these patterns bring with them structural modifications which can be measured only in the long-term. The immediate alarming consequence is that

many families no longer include 'sufficient members of both sexes of an age to reproduce effectively and sufficiently the production unit itself' (Meillassoux 1975).

3.2.2. *Disorganization of productive activities*

Forms of collective organization of agricultural labour in south-east Togo have long since weakened. There still exists, however, a certain amount of co-operation and the use of 'kinship help', especially in peak seasons persists. In this region too, peasants have to contend with physical difficulties of a very specific nature. Whilst enjoying overall advantages (some of the most fertile land in Africa, two rainy seasons, therefore two potential harvests), they have to contend with both relatively low annual rainfall given the latitude (between 800 mm and 1000 mm), and great variation from one year to the next (this variation affects not only total rainfall but also its distribution over the year). The main agricultural activities (hoeing, earthing-up, planting, sowing and harvesting) must be done in the shortest possible time so as to take advantage of certain rains clearly distinguished by the peasants (Adasi or Atitkaklosi for clearing ground, Tekpolesi for earthing-up, Nufasi for sowing, etc.). This partly explains the necessity for having recourse to wage labour and also seasonal contractions in the labour market. These contractions are bound to contribute to the push-effect. Generally speaking therefore it is true that migration brings with it both impoverishment and total disorganization of an already very inelastic labour market.

It is almost unimaginable that women might make up for the absence of men in this market. Obviously they undertake more or less the same type of work but in most cases, time devoted to agriculture is minimal. Development of labour-intensive agriculture such as rice cultivation is hindered by women's desire to adhere to the balance of labour they have already struck between agricultural and commercial activities. Increasingly the opposite occurs: having taken on the job of farming following their husband's absence, women either become buyers in the wage-labour market or form groups to take charge of the clearing and cultivation of lands left fallow by the elderly.

The elderly are thus led to prolong their active life. This phenomenon, though necessary, does not usually encourage the adoption of new practices. It also shortens the pre-productive phase in the lives of children (in or out of school); under-tens now take on work previously done only by those over 12 or 13.

At first sight it seems as though migration has only limited effects on an already tight land market. It does nothing to worsen tensions but nothing to alleviate them either. Nearly half of migrants in the Accra colony had no right whatsoever to land in the village at the time of their departure. And amongst those who did have land (often a tiny plot) very few (13%) waste it by leaving it fallow or planting palm or coconut. A close relative, in 60% of cases a brother, nearly always receives the rights of use of such land with the migrant receiving no *quid pro quo* whatsoever. On his return to the village he usually either exercises his old rights without any problem or takes up an inheritance postponed by his departure. During his absence, he is very rarely an active agent in the

land market (fewer than 13% of migrants residing in Accra acquired or lost land under such conditions). As their active life is prolonged, the elderly continue to exercise their prerogatives in matters of land. One could argue that an area impoverished by migration defends itself by maintaining traditional land-holding practices (the volume of buying and selling of land is much greater in the Mono valley which is relatively unaffected by migratory drain).

Apart from the hindering effect migration has on modernization of techniques, the spread of palm-tree cultivation should be taken into account, palm-trees being considered analogous to an old-age pension. At the same time, local agriculture is increasingly tapped for the feeding of urban populations. Under these conditions, it is extremely difficult to diversify agriculture or to implement a positive policy of soil conservation. Migration is not the sole cause of the disorganization of the agricultural system but it prevents any attempt to halt the increasing spread of extensive agricultural practices. Though compatible with a plantation-type economy, mobility and absenteeism are disastrous in the context of a declining cereal-based economy.

3.2.3. *Drain of money and products*

Clearly, those who want to make a career for themselves are bound to migrate because of the money they hope to make in towns. Even without qualifications they may earn in money eight to ten times more than in the village (with a deduction for rent of between 1,500 and 2,500 CFA). However, the usefulness of such a micro-economic analysis is limited. We would like now to present some examples demonstrating that the migrant, once he has left, continues in many cases to be supported by his departure community. When they arrive in town, migrants are most often unable to meet their most simple needs. 93.5% of migrants in Accra originally from Vo Koutime are or were at the beginning of their migration apprentices (86%), pupils, unemployed or sick. In 61.5% of cases the initial apprenticeship phase lasted five years or more, although none of the trades learned requires an apprenticeship of more than four years. During his apprenticeship the migrant receives no wage and in order to 'buy himself out' he must acquire a 'diploma' (or certificate of aptitude) which may cost as much as 20,000 CFA (exclusive of gifts in kind). 57.5% of heads of families questioned in Accra perform unpaid work, and more than half of these 'independent artisans' work in the service sector (those of Vo Koutime having a predilection for the laundry service). It is not true however that a stated occupation corresponds to initial training nor that it provides the migrant with the means to provide for his family. Table 2, tracing career-profiles, gives some idea of the thinness of the line differentiating employment and unemployment. It also shows the difficulties encountered by the migrant in attempting to sell his labour and escaping from the state of destitution to which he is doomed in towns by the dominant mode of production. If one assumes that the village supports over a period of 4 years the entire costs of 'buying out' 75% of apprentices originally from there, the sum of 12 million francs C.F.A. would have left Vo Koutime. Whereas a rough estimate of the sum left in the village each year by migrant visitors is some 4 million francs CFA. If one adds to this other costs subsidised by Vo Koutime (return journey of visitors often paid by the family, food pro-

Table 2. Career phases of Vo Koutime migrants in Accra

Case 1: *Paid laundryman aged 75*

Activity	Duration (years)	Place
Agricultural labourer	2	Ghana
Domestic	5	Ghana
Agric. labourer	4	Ghana
Peasant	7	Vo Koutime (Togo)
Apprentice jeweller	1	Lagos
Peasant	2	Vo Koutime
Wage labourer	6	Lomé
Fisherman	2	Dahomey
Apprent. laundryman	9	Ghana
Unpaid laundryman	3	Ghana
Paid laundryman	9	Ghana
Unemployed	1	Vo Koutime
Unpaid laundryman	3	Ghana
Paid laundryman	4	Ghana

Case 2: *36 year old unemployed male*

Activity	Duration (years)	Place
Apprentice laundryman	4	Ghana
Unpaid laundryman	1	Ghana
Apprent. carpenter	8	Ghana
Unpaid carpenter	3	Ghana
Paid carpenter	5	Ghana
Unemployed	4	Ghana
Paid carpenter	1	Ghana
Unemployed	3	Ghana

ducts taken back to the town etc.) it becomes apparent that even exclusive of the cost of the village education of numerous migrants, the economic balance is heavily weighted against the departure zone.

CONCLUSION

It seems that development of great pressure to emigrate took place about twenty-five years after the capitalist mode of production imposed its laws in south Togo. But it is by no means true that the mode of production penetrated all facets of social life in the South-East. Bearing in mind such factors as the maintenance of a high level of human fertility, the tight labour-market and perpetuation of old farming practices, it is correct to say like C. Meillassoux

(1975) that 'communities remain qualitatively different from the mode of production dominating them'. It is remarkable that demographic change has in no way favoured agricultural innovation. Is it really by coincidence that one only begins to hear of 'overpopulation' after World War II at precisely the time that migratory pressure was at its strongest? It was precisely after 1945 that the dominant mode of production imposed a two-fold role on the South-East: provision of cheap foodstuffs and labour. Relations established between the capitalist mode of production and social formations in the South-East are contradictory. The most obvious expression of this contradiction is the blocking of petty-commodity production increasingly unable to provide for the food needs of the town. It may be remembered that in 19th-century Europe, petty commodity production was only able to develop and survive for two reasons. Firstly land became a commodity and secondly producers were constantly obliged to adopt new techniques in order to bring the average value of their product down to the lower price offered in the market (autarkic intensification) (Servolin 1972:55f). The nature of migration from the South-East brought about by the capitalist mode of production reinforces the stagnation of the departure society and contributes to its impoverishment. The push-effect finally becomes self-perpetuating. The case of Vo Koutime shows clearly that in a departure zone, the key words are dissolution (felt most acutely at the level of the production unit) and decline (of land, organizational techniques and control over space). The 'fragmented' village space is both the product of recent history and the geographical expression of stagnant petty commodity production.

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