The Nature and Extent of Urbanisation in Zambia

PATRICK O. OHADIKE

University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

Introduction

Most studies of African Urbanisation in Zambia have been sectional in terms of being concerned primarily with either a particular city or a number of them without much consideration of the rural end of the process. The majority of them have also been concerned with problems of migrant stabilisation, assimilation and living conditions in the general sociological context of urbanism.

The town-ward movement has been associated with the growth of commerce and industry, which provide employment and other socio-economic attractions to migrants. Observers believe that it was after the suppression of the slave trade and the forced migration it engendered that the present voluntary influx commenced presumably with the subsequent establishment of legitimate trade. Since then, under fluctuating circumstances of economic prosperity, the towns developed slowly and later the growth gathered momentum, as a result of the post World War II economic recovery.

Urbanisation has transformed traditional life. Observed patterns of social relationships in towns have been growing more heterogeneous and shifting fast away from the virtually gemeinschaft character of rural living. From this has emerged "a society inchoate and incoherent, where the haphazard is more conspicuous than regular, and all is in a state of flux". Temporary migration has been the dominant pattern in the country. This occurred partly because of uncongenial colonial housing and employment conditions and partly because of the Africans' attachment to his land and kin. Regular contacts were maintained with the tribal homes, and when not in employment, the migrants often returned there. The result of this instability

has been the relatively small proportion of Africans who were regarded as permanently or completely urbanised.\(^1\) However, no matter the pattern of migration, the important point underscored by the above review and, indeed, by many other works\(^2\) not cited is the relatively phenomenal social, economic and demographic expansion of the destination of migrants. This growth is apparent in the 1963 census result, which provides the basis of the present analysis for the whole of Zambia. The census has been the first ever complete count of Africans in the country and provides information on their spatial distribution.

**Rural-Farm-Urban Population Pattern**

Residential distribution of population reflects Zambia's political and economic heritage, which is clearly apparent in the use of the terms “African Rural Areas”, “European Farm Areas” and “Urban Areas” to describe the country's rural-urban configurations. Colonial land tenure and settlement policy gave birth to the above residential categories. Before independence in October 1964, the African rural areas were essentially those, including Native Reserves and Native Trust Land, which were virtually occupied only by Africans. If we include Barotse Province where all land rights were retained by the Paramount Chief, such major African areas formed 92.3 per cent of all land area. The remaining 7.7 per cent in which, of course, lie the country's rich line of rail constituted the so called European farm areas, known in colonial parlance as Crown Land. Here Europeans alone were readily allowed to settle. Seven of such farm areas were in the Western Province, four in the Southern, five in the Central, two in the Northern and one each in the Eastern and North-Western provinces. Barotse and Luapula provinces had none.

Within the African rural and European farm areas, particularly the latter, were the urban areas. These towns caught in the grip of rapid industrialisation and money economy, especially after the second world war, have been expanding rapidly more through the in-migration of Africans than through their rate of natural increase. Estimates of the relative contribution of either factor of growth vary. Mitchell estimates that during 1948–58 the African population of the towns of Zambia has been increasing at the rate of about 10 per cent per annum against the overall natural increase of 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) per cent per annum.\(^3\) Recent estimates concede, at least, an overall growth rate in urban areas equal to twice the rate of natural increase. Whatever the final estimate, the point underscored is the significance of rural-urban migration to the growth of towns in the country. The growth has, perhaps, been so profound in trans-

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