Some Aspects of Migration and Mobility\textsuperscript{1} in Ghana

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The propensity of the species Homo Sapiens to move about, across seas, across deserts, over mountains, through dense jungles,—in short, to migrate—is a datum more or less taken for granted among students of mankind. The archaeological record of every continent testifies to its deeply ingrained nature and sempiternal character. Historical research, wherever we turn to it, and whatever branch of human social life and its material, or intellectual, or artistic products we look at, would be rendered jejune without assuming this. In ethnology and sociology, geography and economics, we have to make allowances for it all the time. Nomadic peoples offer striking examples. Spatial mobility is so built into their social and economic life that no sense can be made of their social organization or of their cultural outfit without consideration of this parameter.

Equally prominent in human history is another dimension of the propensity towards movement, that is to say, the movements through time of communities large and small that are documented by changes in their social organization or modes of life.

However, this general propensity of Homo Sapiens—a propensity shared with his hominid ancestors and with large sections of the animal kingdom—is a theme more fitting for the speculative philosopher than for a working anthropologist. As an anthropologist, I am much more interested in what can be learnt from taking a close look at the facts on the ground in a limited socio-geographic region. First, however, let me say a word or two about terminology. It is necessary, I suggest, for clarity of analysis to distinguish “migration” and “mobility”, as separate dimensions of the general process of social movement in space and in time. I propose therefore to use “migration” for the movements of people—individually or in groups—across boundaries; and “mobility” for movement within boundaries. I speak of boundaries in this general and abstract sense; for I want the term to cover any kind of boundary recognised by the actor as a boundary—it may be geographical, or structural or ethnic or cultur-

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Thus the total fact of movement we encounter in a particular case can be made up of both a migration element and a mobility component. Analytically speaking we have to consider both variables in any attempt to depict what is happening.

It is obvious, of course, that I am simply generalising what is a well established practice in the conceptual and statistical procedures of the specialists who have accumulated the vast array of studies on these topics in every country of the world in the past 60 or 70 years. In my paradigmatic case, that of an African from a tribal area migrating to an urban centre, he crosses a series of boundaries, it might even be an international political boundary. He crosses socio-geographical, structural, politico-jural, economic, and cultural boundaries. But once in the new environment, he is faced with a challenge of mobility, first, possibilities of economic mobility in occupation and earning capacity; then, of cultural mobility in his style of living, as well as in his skills, his modes of thought, his aspirations, and so on, during his own life time; lastly possibilities of laying the foundations for the so-called vertical mobility of his children, mobility which from the observer’s angle is movement through time. For what does time signify in the context of human social existence, but the dialectical process of continuity and growth within a generation followed by the replacement of each generation by the next successor generation?

Migration and mobility are aspects of a multidimensional phenomenon in regard to which many analytical questions arise. We are concerned with aspects of the movements of persons in and through social systems; and fully to comprehend such movements we should have to range much more widely than I am able to here. This point is well illustrated if we consider the limitations of bare statistics. The following example from Great Britain, for which I am indebted to Professor Donald MacRae, is illuminating. In the decade 1951–61, Scotland lost—or, if you prefer, exported—about 24,000 people a year to England. In one sense this is a case of geographical mobility; for it represents a population movement within the political society of which Scots as well as English are equal citizens with freedom to live wherever they wish to. However, for the Scotsmen it was also an emigration across a cultural and economic boundary within the total social system. For certain areas in England, such boom towns as Luton, for instance, which received substantial numbers of these Scottish emigrants, it was an immigration, an accretion of a socio-cultural group which had to be physically, socially, and culturally accommodated and in due time integrated. However, if we want to understand the slope of this gradient, so to speak, why 24,000 people left Scotland for England every year and only about 3,000 moved in the reverse direction, we must consider what sort of people they were in social and cultural terms. Those who moved to places like Luton, where the automobile and other new industries were producing the boom, were skilled workers and their families. Elsewhere, the immigrants were professional men and women, mainly doctors (who were then being over-produced in Scotland) and other academically trained cadres.

It is an easily justified guess that, in the case of the skilled workers, the