

THE "MILITARY PARTICIPATION" OF GHANAIAN ETHNIC GROUPS

by *Martin Staniland**

In the course of research on Dagomba politics, I needed to investigate the extent and character of emigration from the Dagomba area. In particular I wanted to find out how far Dagomba migrants became members of the police and armed forces, since in analogous situations in Francophone states emigrant army and police officers sometimes assume the role of patron in local politics. This inquiry led me to compare such employment with that in other groups.

The most immediately accessible data was found in *Special Report "E," Tribes in Ghana* of the 1960 Census.^{1*} Table 12 of this *Report* (pages 59 to 61) gives figures for persons enumerated as resident in "Service barracks, army and brigade camps." Clearly, these figures give only approximate data since they include people other than soldiers and policemen and exclude some of the latter, those living outside barracks. Nevertheless, the errors arising from the definition of the category should not undermine the comparative value of the figures, as it can be assumed that the errors are fairly constant between all groups.

The first set of calculations involved working out what percentage of the total male population of each group was represented in the "service barracks, army and brigade camps" category. These percentages indicate, roughly, the relative commitments of the groups to work in the police and armed forces. The results are to be found in column (1) of the table below.

The second set of calculations involved working out the part of each ethnic group in the whole category of "service barracks, army and brigade camps" residents and comparing the results with the percentages of the total population represented by the various groups. From this comparison it would be possible to see how far the groups were represented "equitably" in the police and armed forces—"equitably" relative to their total numbers. The results of these calculations can be found in columns (2) and (3).

* Lecturer in Politics, University of Glasgow.

^{1*} By B. Gil, A. F. Aryee and D. K. Ghansah, Census Office, Accra, 1964, pp. 128 .i. apps.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	<i>"Barracks" residents of male % population of each ethnic group.</i>	<i>"Barracks" residents in each ethnic group as % of all "barracks" residents</i>	<i>Ethnic group % of total population</i>
All AKAN	0.6	33.3	41.1
(Nzema)	0.7	2.3	1.6
(Fante)	0.6	8.5	10.5
(Asante + Ahafo)	0.4	7.5	13.6
GA	1.0	4.4	3.5
EWE	1.1	18.3	13.0
DAGOMBA	0.4	1.7	3.2
GONJA	1.6	1.0	0.9
GURMA	0.7	3.4	3.5
DAGARTI	0.7	2.8	3.0
BUILSA	3.4	4.1	0.9
FRAFRA	1.4	3.9	2.0
	(1)	(2)	(3)
KUSASI	0.3	0.9	1.7
NAMNAM, MOSI, and MOLE-DAGBANI*** w.o.s.	1.1	3.6	1.8
MO, WANGALA and GRUSI w.o.s....	2.9	3.4	0.7
SISALA	0.7	0.8	0.8

Sources: Census Special Report 'E', pp. 1-5, 59-61.

*** - w.o.s. = without other specification.

The groups which have the largest parts of their male populations involved in police and army employment thus appear to be the *Builsa* (3.4 per cent) and the *Mo*, *Wangala* and unclassified *Grusi* (2.9 per cent). The lowest commitments are those of the *Kusasi* (0.3 per cent), the *Dagomba* and the *Asante Ahafo* (both 0.4 per cent). The overall average for Ghana is 0.7 per cent. The *Ga*, *Ewe*, *Gonja*, *Frafra*, and *Namnam*, *Mosi* and unclassified *Mole-Dagbani* come above average. (It is clear that the *Dagomba* are not major suppliers of manpower to the forces nor are some other northern groups).

From columns (2) and (3) it seems that while the *Akan* as a whole contribute most, they are nevertheless under-represented in terms of total population. The *Nzema* are slightly over-represented among the barracks residents, the *Asante Ahafo* markedly under-represented. The *Ga* are slightly over-represented, the *Ewe* significantly over-represented.

Among the northern groups, the *Dagomba*, as expected, are under-represented; so are the *Kusasi*, and (very slightly) the *Dagarti* and *Gurma*. The most strikingly over-represented are the *Builsa* (4.1 per cent of barracks residents and only 0.9 per cent of the population) as well as the *Mo*, *Wangala* and unclassified *Grusi*. The *Frafra* and the *Namnam*, *Mosi* and unclassified *Mole-Dagbani* are also over-represented.

Any significance these figures have should be firmly qualified in two ways. First, the data is rough and the differences arising in the results often quite minor. Secondly, and as importantly, there is no self-evident reason why a principle of proportional representation *should* be applied to recruitment to the police and armed forces. Sociologically, the point of such comparative exercises is that they point to further problems about why some groups are more attracted than others to employment in the services. The concept of "equity" is here used heuristically, *not* politically.