# ECONOMIC DIFFERENTIATION AMONG GHANAIAN MIGRANT COCOA FARMERS

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the economic basis of differentiation among migrant cocoa farmers in the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. Polly Hill, the pioneer student of migrant farmers on the Gold Coast (now Chana), saw the earlier migrant farmers uniformly capitalistic, embattled entrepreneurs who deserved serious study because they were capitalists. (Hill: 1963a 203-223; 1963b; 1970). But certainly, in the first two decades of cocoa production what Gunnarsson (1978: 107) identifies as the socio-economic factors of differentiation could not have existed. Hopkins (1973) believes in the emergence of Kulak-type farmers at a point in the production for export, and writes: "On the Gold Coast a small group of wealthy farmers, who were responsible for a disproportionately large amount of cocoa shipped in the colony, had already appeared by 1930" (1973: 238-239). Ginnarsson (op. cit.) goes at some length into the question of "socio-economic stratification" of farmers but in the older cocoa growing areas. He describes the factors of stratification as the commercialization land and the of marketing system based on cash financing, which led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a group of landlords, brokers and factors, and the corresponding impoverishment of the large majority of farmers who took advances and pledged their crops to the brokers and factors (pp. 110-121).

Bernstein (1979: 430) has suggested two bases of differentiation within African peasantries, among whom must be included the migrant cocoa farmers (Howard, 1980: 61-77; Arhin 1983b: 471-475). Bernstein's two bases of differentiation are those in the "materialist sense" that is, in terms of relations to the means of production. and in the "sociological sense" or in terms of life-style. This paper examines differentiation among the migrant cocoa farmers in the "materialist sense", and not the "sociological sense". There are no visible bases for differentiation in the sociological sense. The migrant settlements generally consist of simply constructed wattle-and-daub isolated homesteads, which do not form communities. so that differentiation, even in terms of traditional ranking (Arhin, 1983a: 2-22). does not exist. The living conditions of the farmers are those of frontier farmers with inconsiderable material culture. the same time it was clear from observation and questioning among the migrant cocoa farmers that there were substantial economic differences among them; and that on the basis of these differences it is possible to distinguish groups with differential relations to the means of production and who, consequently, correspond to the groups Bernstein distinguishes as "poor", "middle" and "rich" peasants.

Before examining the basis of this differentiation, I point out some of the characteristics of the migrants in the Control and Mostor Positors

Central and Western Regions.

### II. THE MIGRANTS

Unlike the migrant cocca farmers of the late nineteenth century, who were Akwapem, and the Ga-Adangme of the present Eastern and Greater Accra Regions (Hill, op. cit.), the migrant cocca farmers in the Central and Western Regions are drawn from all the ethnic groups and the regions of Chana and beyond. Responses from 809 migrants interviewed show the ethnic composition of the respondents as follows:

Akan	670 or	82%
Ga-Adangme	70 or	
Eve	32 or	4%
Northern/Upper		
Region Nationals	6 or	1%
Other Chanaians	9 or	1%
Aliens	22 or	3%
Total	909	100%

The Akan, who are predominant in the Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern and Western Regions, consist of the Agona. Akwapem, Akyem, Asante, Assin, Brong, Denkyira, Effutu, Ekumfi, Gomoa, Kwahu, Nizema and Senya, and collectively constitute about 43.5% of the peoples of Ghana. according to the 1970 Census. They inhabit the forests of central and southern Chana and following the lead of the Alovapem pioneers (Hill, 1956; 1963) have, since the beginning of this century, been the major producers of cocoa. The Akwapem established the tradition of migrant cocoa farming in the late nineteenth century, and migrant coccoa farming has, since then, been a continuation of the farmer's occupation in virgin forest lands. The Central and Western Regions are the latest such lands.

The Ga-Adangme (Ga and Krobo) and the Ede of Southeastern and Eastern Ghana, have also been long associated with cocoa cultivation either as cocoa farm owners — for the Krobo on land purchased from the people of Akyem Abuakwa — or as labourers (Hill, 1963). The various peoples of the Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana and of Burkina Faso have been connected with

cocca production but mainly as labourers on the farms (Beckett 1944: 60-61; Metcalfe, 1964: 65).

The average age of the migrants was 45 years and 85% of them were over 30. 71% were illiterate and 28% literate. 41% had previously been cocoa farmers; 35% had turned from food crop and vegetable farming to cocoa farming. The rest (24%) had engaged in multiple occupations, including the cultivation of citrus/orange, coconut, oil palm, coffee or cola. Some had been custodians of family property, land and buildings. The migrants included traditional office-holders such as stool occupants (sub-chiefs) lineage heads, and palace functionaries.

The migrants, then, had not all been cocoa farmers. Just over 40% of them had gone to farm cocoa in new areas. 60% had turned to cocoa farming from other occupations in response to the high cocoa prices of the nineteen-fifties. Investment in cocoa then seemed worthwhile. The data shows that while one or two migrants had moved to the new cocoa production areas before 1950 the westward migration really took off in the fifties. The presence of literates in cocoa farming is of some interest as a new development: in the territories that now constitute Chana. literates were not expected to go into farming of any sort, (See Addo, 1974: 205).

In the context of this paper, the significant point relates to property ownership among migrants. A migrant's command over the means of production in the area of settlement depended on whether or not he owned property and the kind of property he owned. This is because farming in the mid-twentieth century requires considerable outlay. The size of the farm depends on the farmer's ability to purchase land (See Okali, Owusu-Ansah and Rourke, 1974: 175-179) labour and farm inputs such as matchets, weedicides and pesticides; some farmers even need to invest in a cocoa shed or storage building.

Responses from 814 respondents to questions on property (cash and equipment) showed the following: in the Assin area the average amount farmers took to the farms was 076.70; in Wasa 0148.57; and in Sehwi Ø227.70. The figures in Wasa and Sehwi probably reflect the predominance of Asante migrant farmers in the two Farmers generally had amounts areas. ranging from under €10 (about £5 sterling at the time) to \$1,000.00. 91% of the respondents had between @1 and @400; and 9% between \$2400 and \$21,000.00. were a few outstanding individuals, such as an erstwhile cocoa farmer who arrived with \$2,000 and complained that it was inadequate.

Besides cash, farmers also brought with them some equipment. This included farm tools such as matchets, hoes, axes and sharpening stones; personal effects, household goods such as cooking utensils, mats and beddings; and "business" items, including guns, sewing machines, smithing tools, looms and lorries.

The amount of cash and equipment a farmer brought into the field depended on his occupational background, and determined his standing as a farmer. His equipment facilitated his settlement in the new area and the cash gave him access to the means of production, land, labour and farm inputs.

I shall now go on to examine how differentiation among the farmers is related to access to the means of production.

## II (a) FARMERS AND LAND

The size of farm land a farmer acquires and the terms of its acquisition depend on the amount of cash he has on arrival in the farming area (Okali et al. op. cit.). The Central and Western Regions are inhabited by the Assin, Sehwi and Wasa peoples, all Akan sub-groupings with centralized political and corresponding land tenure systems. Among the various Akan sub-groups, land sales may have been rare before the late nineteenth century for a variety of economic and religious

reasons.<sup>2</sup> But since the Akwapem moved into the Akyam Abuakwa area in the last decade of the nineteenth century, land sales have become a firmly established aspect of cocoa production in areas other than the producer's own birth-place, where he has usufructuary rights in land as part of his bundle of socio-political rights.<sup>3</sup>

The survey showed that in the Central and Western Regions, land was available for outright purchase (trama) in all the three areas; landowners included (i) chiefs, stool occupants and citizens; the primary owners of the land, and (ii) migrants, relatives of migrants and spouses of migrants; secondary owners of land. A This means that all the three areas had reached the point where land had become a commodity; whoever acquired 5 or purchased land could sell it (See also Benneh, 1970).

It was not possible to establish the cost of land in any of the units of size mentioned by the farmers; poles, "armlengths" (abasa), or ropes (ahama). in relation to the estimated amount of money migrants brought with them to the field, it was high, so that some individual farmers had to form companies 5 order to be able to afford outright. purchases. Unspecified areas of land were estimated to cost between \$71.14 and 076.86 in the three areas. But these sums must be set against the estimated amount of \$147.09 that migrants had on arrival.

The data shows that not many farmers acquired land through outright purchase, so that outright purchasers of land themselves became landlords and land speculators, and formed a group apart from the migrant farmers who obtained land on the following terms:

abusa: an arrangement by which a cultivator divided his cultivated farm or harvest proceeds into three with the landowner and took two/thirds or a third; abunu: an arrangement by which farms or proceeds were divided into two, and the labourer took a half;

nto (ground rent): an arrangement by which the landowner claimed varying proportions of proceeds as tribute.

These arrangements, other than outright purchase, turned the migrant farmer into a dependent labourer of the landlord, and gave him uncertain tenure on two grounds. The landlord could vary the terms of holding to an extent unacceptable to the tenant so that either he quit the farm or took to litigation; 7 and it was never clear to a tenant that his heirs could inherit his farms. Landlords were very much inclined to take advantage of migrants so that in the three areas the most usual arrangement for land acquisition were in the following order:-

1) abusa 2) abunu 3) mto 4) trama Accordingly, the survey showed the following order of preference among the migrant farmers for the various terms of land acquisition:

Rank	Terras	Per cent
1	outright purchase	41
2	abusa	25
3	abunu	9
4	free (gift)	8
4	any	8
5	contract	5
6	ground rent into	3
7	share proceeds	1

Two obstacles stood in the way of outright land purchases: lack of cash and landlords' increasing unwillingness to sell land outright. A man who arrived in the field with a sizeable amount was able to purchase land, often in enough quantity to enable him to speculate in land, and join the group of landlords. He was then freed from the burdens of tenancy, uncertain tenure, varying tenurial terms and possible litigation.

On the other hand, those who obtained land on abusa, abunu and into terms belonged to the class of tenant or dependent farmers, whose status was only

slightly above that of labourers. They differed among themselves only on the basis of the different terms of tenancy; a two-thirds share in cultivated farms or harvest proceeds was more profitable than a third share or indeterminate ground-rent or tribute exacted by the landlord as he pleased.

Migrant farmers might then be differentiated economically on the basis of the terms on which they acquired land for cultivation. The two broad groupings were outright purchasers of land and tenant The first group consisted of previous cocoa farmers and others who went to the field with cash and equipment to continue the "business" of cocoa farming in new areas. The second group may or may not have been previously associated with cocoa farming but in either case they did not have enough cash to enable them to set themselves up as independent cocoa farmers. The first group can be identified as among Polly Hill's capitalist farmers while the second group constitutes the rural working class.

## II (b) FARMERS AND LABOUR

As with land so has labour also become in part a commodity that a farmer could obtain through purchase. Labour is identified as, in part, a commodity because the data shows that farmers used three kinds of labour on the farms. These were family, hired and co-operative (Akan, nnoboa) labour. Family labour was nominally unpaid service of a wife, child, sister's son or daughter (as among the matrilineal Akan) or of any other relation. Hired labour was of three kinds: (a) casual or 'by day' labour; (b) permanent or full-time labour and (c) contract labour. Casual or 'by day' labour meant that a farmer recruited the labourer for a day's work on the farm, paid him the basic wage prevailing in the area and, in some cases, provided him with food and drink, as well, in the course of his Permanent or full-time labour work. consisted of (i) annual and (ii) seasonal

labour. An annual labourer was recruited for the whole year and received remuneration in cash plus other incentives such as food, clothing and shelter. A seasonal labourer was hired to undertake certain farming duties at the peak season, October to January, and for as long as the need for which he was employed existed. regard to contract labour, agreement is reached with a labourer or a group of labourers to do a specified piece of work for a specified cash payment. Co-operative labour is mutual aid labour, an adaptation of an arrangement of the past by which young men mutually satisfied family and affinal demands in the farm and for other household tasks. The responses from 814 questionnaires showed that:-

53% used family labour; 33% hired labour; and 14% used **mnoboa** labour:<sup>8</sup>

Hill says of labour on the cocoa farms:

And while on the subject of farm labourers, it must be noted as a most important point of principle (though, again, one that has gone unnoticed) that farmers never "wasted" their savings on farm labour employment; they rarely employed labourers until with the help of their families they had established sufficiently bearing cocoa farms to reward their labour with a share of the cocoa income (Hill, 1970:2). Killick also states:

These figures suggest that the cocoa industry is essentially run by those who run the farms with the help of their families (Killick, 1966: 238-239). Hill and Killick are right only to a limited extent. The average cocoa farmer is usually not in a position to employ annual or seasonal labour although larger farmers employ all the categories of hired labour. Even in the late 1930's the Commission on the marketing of West African cocoa remarked on labour on the cocoa farms:

The original conception of the Gold Coast farmer ... is of a peasant culti-

vator who, with his own labour and the help of his family, grows his food and tends an acre or two of cocoa trees. This picture is no longer true of more than a minority of farms, and these of the smallest size. The employment of labour has become a regular feature of cocoa growing, even where the owner resides on the farm (Metcalfe, 1964:653). The commission probably exaggerated the extent to which paid labour had replaced family labour, but it was clearly the case that the use of paid labour particularly of migrants on the cocoa farms was increasing. Addo (1974:206) has written of labour on the cocoa farms:

of those who did not require permanent labour the main reason given was that the farm(s) was (were) not large enough to justify employing such personnel. Many felt that they could always deploy family labour and therefore did not require permanent labour.

The use of hired labour is more ungent in the migrant farming areas where, owing to the competition for land, a farmer has to clear his acquired land within reasonable periods in order to avoid litigation arising from counter-claims (Okali et al. 1974). And the bigger the farm, the more hired labour is needed to supplement family labour. Thus it was found that 78% of all hired labour was used for weeding and clearing, while 66% of all family labour was used in weeding and planting. (Addo 1974:206) 27% used only one kind of labour, that is, family labour, to establish and maintain their cocoa farms, as compared to 5% who used only hired labour for this; and 58% of the sample combined their own services with those of family. casual and co-operative labour in cocoa cultivation (See also Addo 1974:206).

Farmers employed various kinds of labour on their farms, and the use of hired labour was a matter of the capacity to pay. This becomes clear when labour costs are examined in the light of the average amount of money that migrants claimed to have

brought with them. The following were our estimated costs of labour:

Casual or 'by day' labour - 82 pesewas per person, per day,

Annual labour - 98.92 pesewas per person per year,

Contract labour - 34.15 pesewas per contract, per year.

It was noted above that farmers had an average of £147.09 on arrival. The migrant could barely subsist on this amount, much less use it for hiring labour. In addition, the acquisition of land on any condition involved the use of money and purchased drinks as consideration. After the acquisition of land, not much money was left for hiring labour.

In summary, a migrant cocoa farmer with enough cash was likely to employ hired labour on his farm; and, in fact, he had to employ hired labour for clearing purposes in order to validate his claim to his acquired land. Land left uncleared for a year or more after acquisition was likely to attract counterclaims and become an object of litigation. It is more than likely that those who hired labour were those who made outright purchases of land.

They not only owned land, the basic means of cocoa production; they also bought the labour of others.

## II (c) FARMERS AND FARM INPUTS

In order to safeguard his farm against pests, and in other ways maintain high productivity, the farmer requires such farming inputs as matchets, spraying equipment and sprays, and fertilizers. Before 1973, a Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Cocoa Services, administered the supply of these inputs to the farmers. Since 1973, the Cocoa Services Division has become part of the cocoa Marketing Board.

It was found from the 807 responses to the questionnaires that 84% of the faimers regarded the administration of supplies as highly unsatisfactory. The average distance from farms to the supply centres was nineteen miles, and the extremely poor network of roads prevented access to lorries, so that supplies had to be head-loaded to the farms. Of the 84% of the respondents who considered the administration of supplies unsatisfactory, 9 out of the 10 thought the cost of the services was too high, and made such statements as:

"Owing to the high prices, I have not been able to buy a spraying machine from them";

"I am unable to pay for their services. I cannot buy gammalin"; and
"their supplies come in at a time that

"their supplies come in at a time that I have not the money to buy any".

The high costs meant that only the relatively rich farmers could afford them. Some of the farmers were aware of this and said "they feel my farm is not big enough to warrant their working on it". The rich had alternative sources. Some of the farmers stated "I buy these things from Kumasi" or "I buy my DDT from a buying agency".

In some areas, supplies of the spraying material were linked up with possession of the spraying machine. Farmers complained that officials refused to sell gammalin to them because they did not possess chit coupons issued to owners of spraying machines, who were considered to be the only people entitled to buy gammalin; that gammalin was supplied on rationing basis to non-holders of "blue cards"; and that these restrictions made it impossible for the farmers to benefit from the services. Farmers said "I cannot buy DDT from them because I have no permit to do so" and "they attend only to those with certificates, but I have not got one". cards" and "certificates" were issued to the owners of spraying machines, the big farm owners. 10

As is common experience in Ghana in respect of scarce commodities, the relatively rich farmers, in control of hired labour, also had access to most of the farm inputs.

## III. THE PROBLEMS OF SETTLEMENT

The possession of "capital" in the form of both cash and equipment enabled a migrant to deal satisfactorily with the early problems of settlement; the absence of capital induced a recourse to solutions that generally curtailed the independence of the farmer and gave him a labourer's status, from which it is usually difficult to recover. The respondents to our questionnaires stated their problems, other than the lack of capital as:

45% said it was difficult to maintain their family owing to; insufficient food (25%), lack of accommodation (16%), and ill-health of members of the family (3%).

or the general inability to meet the bare necessities of life:

31% referred to financial problems which were related to difficulties in obtaining farm land, lack of capital for farm development (lack of farming implements and other inputs) and poor conditions of the farm, poor soils, and threats posed by pests and crop diseases;

14% stated their problems as social: they had difficulties in adapting to the new environment; the non-Akan among them had language difficulties; the host-communities were unfriendly; there was a general absence of such amenities as markets, medical and transport facilities and good drinking water; or the settlements were isolated.

The problems were basically financial. With adequate money, a migrant could deal effectively with the problems.

Farmers were then asked how they dealt with their problems, and answered as follows: 61% hired themselves out; 19% stayed with friends and relatives; 10% borrowed from friends, relatives and others; and 2% fell back on resources from home such as proceeds from farms, especially cocoa, or rents from buildings or savings, or the sale of personal property; and 8% did not reply.

The 2% who had resources at home must be included in the group of the well-to-do farmers. A great majority of the rest must be seen as dependent farmers, whose farming career could be imperilled through lack of adequate attention to their own farms, while working for their living. insecure accommodation, or indebtedness. The future of migrants with inadequate capital is fairly predictable. They either fall victim to the demands of a landlord. to whom a tenant farmer is little more than a labourer, or they get into perpetual indebtedness because their output is small and they have inter-seasonal monetary needs.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Migrant cocoa farmers constitute a well stratified peasant group, with their initial capital for farming operations as the major determinant of stratification. initial capital outlay determines the migrant's relationship to the means of production, land, labour and farm inputs. It makes a crucial difference that a migrant is able to (a) purchase his farm land, (b) hire labour, and (c) secure farming implements and services. A man who purchases land (often more than one plot) attracts labour for hire, and also through wellplaced gifts is able to attract more than average attention from those who administer the supply of farm inputs. He is also a full-time farmer who devotes full attention to the "management" of his farm business. "Management" includes supervising labour and ensuring supplies of implements and other inputs. His business includes continuous land purchases, and speculation in land provides him with additional funds for the farm (Hill, 1963a, 1970).

The "business" or capitalist farmers, perhaps only 5% of the migrant farmers, must be distinguished from the tenant or dependent farmers, many of whom are both farmers and labourers. But it is possible to make distinctions within this broad second group, on the basis of relationship

to the means of production and the extent to which a farmer works for others in order to make a living. From the response given to questions relating to problems of settlement, it is possible to suggest that about 37% of the migrants belong to a middle rank o farmers who are only semi-dependent, and 67% to a rank of dependent farmers who may also be classified as semi-labourers and form the pool of rural labour.

The ultimate basis of the differentiation is the occupational background of the migrants. Rural socio-economic organization in the older cocoa growing areas is transferred to the migrant areas. Capitalist farmers in the older cocoa growing areas and some townsmen become capitalist farmers in the migrant areas, where there are also the same strata of "upper", "middle" and "lower" ranked farmers as are found in the older cocoa growing areas.

#### MOTES

1. This paper is based on a socio-economic survey of migrant cocos farmers in Central and Western Regions conducted in 1972-73. The research team combined the methods of observation and questleasuire administration through interviews of farmers scattered in settlements in Assin, Sehvi and Wasa. Response to the interviews was good. The teen was able to interview as many as 814 respondents in the three areas in the areas in the two regions. pager reflects on some of the material Arbin (mimeographed) presented in Legon, 1986, The Expension of Cocos Production: the working conditions of migrant coces farmers in the Control and Western Regions of Chunn. stated in that volume, my information from Asante migrant farmers shows that the conditions in which they work have not changed to any significant extent so that the findings retain their value. Miss Karen Legge, University of

- Liverpool, read a dreft of the paper and made some valuable suggestions.
- For example as among the Asante, see Rettrey 1929; and Senneh's survey of 20th century developments in land tenure, Senneh 1970: 43-61.
- On the principles of Aken lend tenure, see Serbeh 1897, (F. Cess, 1968), Rettray 1929, Busia 1951, Ollenu 1962, 1962.
- 4. The terms "primary" and "secondary" are used instead of "native" and "non-native" to signify original and non-original occupancy.
- 5. Land was sometimes obtained as a gift after a long sojeurn in an area, particularly if donor and recipient were fellow members of any of the Akan claus; see Arhin 1986: 22.
- 6. According to Hill, land-purchasing companies are organizations for land purchasing purposes associated with patrilineal peoples, Hill 1963:8. But a "company" could be a group of mutually acquainted farmers who pool their resources together in order to obtain land of the desired size.
- 7. Answers to interviews showed that 17% (i.e. 1 out of 6) of the migrant farmers had been involved in disputes of two kinds: 59% were disputes over ownership of land and 34% over breaches of contract, and the average cost of dispute settlement was £240.00. There was a sumber of unreported cases, the farmers preferring to leave well alone entangling themselves in litigation. Unreported cases erose from arbitrary variations in terms of land grants. arbitrary increases in rent, ate, and the grant of the same land to two persons.
- 8. On labour see also Beckett 1944: 60.
- 9. See Sarbah (1897) 1966: 86-87.
- 10. Killick 1966: 247 gives a short account of the various cocoa diseases, and the measures taken to combat them.

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