

**Urbanisation and Social Change in West Africa - Josef Gugler  
and William S. Flanagan . 135 pp.  
Cambridge University Press · Cambridge · 1978 · £3.95**

The main point of this book is to show the multi-faceted process of urbanization that took place in West Africa at the turn of the 20th century. West Africa shares most of its experiences with the rest of Africa and indeed the Third World at large. The region came under colonial rule and as a result of this colonization it has remained poor. The first chapter therefore outlines the history of this region, showing that at one time you could talk of rural societies; people whose economies, polity and culture were relatively self-contained and whose contacts was mostly with the neighbouring groups. The cities at this time were African and most monuments of African culture. With the arrival of the white man in the region however, there was rapid urbanization on many parts of West Africa especially along the coast which served as contact points for Africans and Europeans. Thus urbanization developed to a large extent according to the pull of trade toward the coast and foreign markets.

The development from African to European rule in West Africa and indeed the rest of the continent has been the most important factor in urbanization, while urbanization itself is part of the whole syndrome of colonialism. Thus the present pattern and conditions of urbanization in West Africa owe much to the colonial past. This does not only affect the location of these towns but also the role they have played and are continuing to play in the economic development of the independent states.

On the second chapter - The Rural-Urban Migration - the authors believe that the predominant

cause of the Rural-Urban Migration has been economic, i.e., the dramatic increase in urban populations is the result of the concentration of economic opportunities in the urban sector. They, Gugler and Flanagan, believe that this proves that there is severe urban-rural irregularities. Rural emigration involves opportunity cost because aggregate production remains lower than it otherwise would be. This last point ties very nicely with our situation here; especially when considering that most of the people who emigrate to the urban areas are able-bodied young men and women - in fact the cream of the nation. Only the old, weaklings and the very young are left behind in rural areas. As a result there is nobody to effectively carry out agricultural work and consequently production falls. Normally this Rural-Urban migration manifests itself in squatter settlement, yet it is interesting that these squatter settlements have always been part of the metropolitan areas but have never been fitted in the pattern of urban development. Our urbanization process in Botswana for instance follows the same pattern. Generally, Rural-Urban Migration in the Third World at large has been too massive so that the urban population within a short time by far exceeds the plans of urban development.

The rest of the chapters concentrate on the social changes that accompany urbanization, e.g., the social relationships within an urban setting, the family, etc.

One good point about this book is that the authors do not take the narrowly sociological viewpoint, but also bring in the politician, economists, historians, demographers, geographers, etc. This probably makes this book one of the best that has been produced on the subject.

Another point is that, as part of the developing world, we are in a better position to appreciate this book better, since we have also been colonized at some point, even though the conditions may have varied a little.

My main criticism on this book is that while it gives us a comprehensive picture of urbanization in West Africa and the problems that followed, it does not give us an alternative model of urbanization.

*C. Moremi*

### **African Social Studies (A Radical Reader)**

**Edited by Peter C.W. Gutkind and Peter Waterman -481 pp.  
Heinemann Education Books · London, 1977 . £2.90**

Gutkind and Waterman have produced the sort of text which many young Africanists have for a long time been waiting for. It is a pioneer work with an announced broad left radical orientation, and boasts of a wide collection of sources which lend the work a very rich and informative character. The text is divided into eight parts: Methodology, Historical Stages and Transition, The Political Economy of Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism, Social Structure - the Process of Class Formation, Ideology, Politics and a Bibliographical Guide. Under these rubrics extracts for selected papers have been collected in a well-arranged manner. The study concentrates almost exclusively on Africa south of the Sahara. Also Southern Africa comes in vaguely for an altogether rather spare treatment. Another weakness in the collection is that some of the papers are too brief, often the reader's appetite is not sufficiently satisfied, he is stimulated but effectively tantalized. All the same the authors by producing this work have given leftist approaches to social sciences of Africa a major shot in the arm. Students have now a basic refreshing radical textbook of readings to grow on. The appearance of this book also lends institutionalised respectability to radical views, a position which some of us have long awaited, but now obviously this has started in earnest.

*K. Prah*