

# INTEGRATION OF NZEMA MIGRANTS INTO THE IVORIAN (IVORY COAST) SOCIETY DURING THE COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL PERIODS

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## Abstract

Unlike the pre-colonial period, migration in Africa during the colonial and post-colonial epochs was bedevilled with migrants' integration-related challenges. Research on the integration of international migrants into their host communities in West Africa refers to migrants' challenges that are related to economic downturns. The situation of Nzema migrants in Cote d'Ivoire appears different. Using moderate postmodernist theory as a lens and information from the lived experiences of return migrants, current migrants, relatives of migrants and supplemented with secondary sources of data, the study aimed at investigating the peculiar situation of Nzema migrants in Cote d'Ivoire from 1893 to the 1990s. The study established that between 1893 and 1960, Nzema migrants in Côte d'Ivoire experienced integration problems that were not associated with the economic situation in that country. Furthermore, irrespective of Cote d'Ivoire's economic boom during the period from 1960 to the 1980s, some Nzema migrants were confronted with integration challenges. As coping strategies, the migrants assimilated themselves into the Ivorian society. The study contributes to the conversation on migrants' integration into their host communities by unveiling that migrants' challenges are not always tied to the economy of the host country.

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Existing research on migrants' integration into their host communities reveals a nexus between migrants' challenges and the economic downturns in the host country. This study, on the contrary, establishes integration challenges that were not related to the economic conditions in the host country as experienced by Nzema migrants in Côte d'Ivoire between 1893 and the 1990s. During the pre-colonial era, there were movements of individuals and groups of people of varied ethnic groups, clans and villages all over the borderless lands of Africa due to reasons related to trade, mining, fishing, wars of conquest, search for conducive climatic conditions and the desire to escape from slave raids and warfare. The migration of people during this era was not characterised by significant integration-related problems. The scramble for and the partition of Africa, among various European imperial powers, plunged Africa into a colonial situation and created boundaries between the various African states. It also created integration problems for migrants. During the post-colonial period, international migration policies of newly - independent African governments intensified the integration challenges of migrants. This paper contributes to the conversations on migrants' integration into their host communities.

Existing scholarship reveals cases of both peaceful and challenging integration of migrants into their host communities in sub-Saharan Africa during colonial and post-colonial times. For instance, there is an indication of peaceful integration of immigrants from within and outside West Africa into Ghanaian society in good economic times during the colonial period (Peil, 1974). In colonial Ghana, foreign immigrants monopolised different sectors of the Ghanaian economy as they were employed by the colonial authorities and expatriate firms. From the mid-1960s when the country was faced with economic crisis, however, there was non-peaceful co-existence between immigrants and Ghanaians. The situation resulted in the deportation of aliens from Ghana based on the Compliance Order of 18 November 1969 (Peil, 1974). In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, between 1960 and the 1990s when the Ivorian economy boomed, President Felix Houphouët Boigny encouraged immigration into the country as a solution to the nation's lack of human capital (Adepoju, 2005:41-42). Migrants, during that period, faced insignificant integration challenges. From 1993 when internal political and economic crises resulted in an economic downturn in Côte d'Ivoire, the country became an unsafe destination for migrants. The economic factor in the peaceful integration of migrants is further confirmed by the fact that integration fails in times of economic pressure when there is expulsion of aliens (Ratha et al.,

2010). This happened in Nigeria in 1983 when Ghanaians were expelled and Ivorian immigrants were also stripped of their rights (Ratha et al., 2010). Similar occurrences include those in Sierra Leone in 1968; Côte d'Ivoire in 1958, 1964, and 1999; Ghana in 1969; Chad in 1979, and Equatorial Guinea in 1974 (Adepoju, 2005: 29). Besides deportation, other challenges of migrants such as restriction to dirty, demeaning and dangerous jobs, discrimination and vulnerability, prohibition of unionising, distilment and exploitation have been identified (Adepoju, 2011). Migrants' integration challenges during Ghana's economic downturn in the 1960s have also been established. Those challenges, which have been referred to as negative attitudes towards migrants, included name-calling (which depicted migrants as foreigners), scapegoating and attempts to eliminate migrants out of competition over resources as exhibited by the Ghana Union of Traders Association (GUTA) in the informal sector of Ghana's economy (Okyereko, 2019:15-17). Other obstacles to migrants' peaceful integration were acts of exploitation exhibited against migrants in Ghana as they became susceptible to abuse from some Ghanaians. School officials' resistance and practical refusal to enrol migrants into classes principally due to their linguistic challenges and poor performance which required teachers to give them more time, also served as migrants' integration challenges (Okyereko, 2019: 15-17).

Political interventions to facilitate the integration of migrants into host societies at all times in West Africa, have been alluded to in some research. There have been highlights on issues related to heads of states and governments' meetings in efforts to create a borderless sub-region through the adoption of an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) passport in replacement of a national passport, boosting transport and communication between member states, and ensuring free movement of goods and persons across the borders of the ECOWAS member states (Adepoju, 2002: 15). Interventions by ECOWAS to ensure free movement, right of residence and establishment for refugees and other citizens of member states have also been alluded to (Charrière and Frésia, 2008: 21-22). The need to enforce international human rights laws such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and other international human rights laws specific to migration have also been emphasised (Benneh, 2005). There is, for instance, the Declaration on Human Rights of Individuals who are not nationals of the country in which they reside. Again, there is the

International Development Law which stresses the right of individuals to contribute and partake in the benefits of development. The International Refugee Law, International Migration Worker Law and the 1979 ECOWAS Treaty all emphasise free movement and settlement of persons in member states (Benneh, 2005).

Irrespective of the formulated policies on free movement and settlement of nationals in ECOWAS member states other than their own, there have been some militating factors. Adepoju identifies militating factors including the non-existence of conscious efforts among ECOWAS member states due to the different economic groups to which they belonged, the absence of peace and political stability in some member states, and economic downturns, which prevented member states from persistently upholding economic policies (Adepoju, 2002: 13).

To combat the hindrances to migrants' integration into their host societies, some recommendations have been made. Protection of human rights at the borders, solutions for unsuccessful asylum-seekers (Charrière and Frésia, 2008: 40 - 41), formulation of a policy on migrant education in Ghana and efficient management of movement of people (Okyereko, 2019: 30-31) have been suggested.

Scholars, aforementioned in this paper for establishing migrants' integration-related challenges, did so through demographic and ethnographic lenses as well as in a general fashion. The general approach used in investigating migrants' experiences hinders the possibility of highlighting specificities. This paper addresses that problem by exploring the specific integration experiences of Nzema migrants in Côte d'Ivoire during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Their coping strategies are also explored.

### **The Nzema of South-Western Ghana**

Until 1893, Nzemaland, the traditional area inhabited by the Nzema, stretched from the Ankobra River in south-western Ghana to Grand Bassam in present-day south-eastern Côte d'Ivoire (Valsecchi, 2001: 399; Allou, 2013).<sup>1</sup> From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese christened the area Apollonia and its inhabitants, Apollonians. In 1848, the area was divided into two unequal halves, Western and Eastern Apollonia. On 12 July 1893, an Anglo-Franco colonial boundary agreement

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<sup>1</sup> Valsecchi provides extensive discussions on the various parameters for the definition of the name Nzema. Allou mentions the settlement of the Nzema people at Assini, Adjuan, Grand-Bassam and Azuletti in present day Cote d'Ivoire.

delimited the Nzema territory by joining some Western Apollonia communities to the French colony of Côte d'Ivoire. The Tano River was used as the line of division between south-western Gold Coast and south-eastern Côte d'Ivoire. The inhabitants of those Nzema communities that were joined to Côte d'Ivoire maintained the name Apollo which was the short form of Apollonians. The presence of the Apollo in Côte d'Ivoire attracted other Apollonians in the Gold Coast to migrate there irrespective of the colonial boundary. In 1927, through the orders of Governor Alexander R. Slater, the original name of the people, Nzema, was readopted. Thus, Western and Eastern Nzema traditional areas. This study, thus, investigated the integration of the Nzema of Western and Eastern Nzema traditional areas who migrated to Côte d'Ivoire during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The existence of Nzema communities in Côte d'Ivoire and a continuum in emigrations from Western and Eastern Nzema traditional areas in Ghana to Côte d'Ivoire account for this study's focus on the Nzema.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

This study employed Sarantakos' moderate postmodernist theory as a lens to investigate Nzema migrants' specific integration challenges in Côte d'Ivoire. Moderate postmodernism employs a moderate approach to reality and research (Sarantakos, 2013: 339). Sarantakos maintains that moderate postmodernists "believe that knowledge is (a) pluralistic and determined by an inherent diversity, ephemera, fragmentation and ambiguity; (b) depends on social and cultural conditions, discourses, belief systems, interpretative models, language systems and power systems (*e.g.*, class, race, gender, and families); and (c) is socially constructed" (Sarantakos, 2013:339). Moderate postmodernism was used as a lens to unearth the real historical experiences of Nzema migrants based on its compatibility with historical writing. History focuses on specific people, space and time in the production of what can be considered as the reality. Thus, applying moderate postmodernism to historical writing implies that there is no single history, but a multiplicity of histories based on differences in socio-cultural, economic and political conditions associated with people, space and time. It, thus, requires deconstructing grand narratives in which varied people, spaces and time are submerged. The existing general studies on migrants' integration into their host communities in West Africa have culminated in the submergence of experiences specific to particular groups of people at different times and spaces. Accordingly, specific integration-related

experiences of Nzema immigrants in Côte d'Ivoire are explored to deconstruct the general studies on West African international migrants' integration into their host communities.

## **Methodology**

This qualitative study focused on Nzema return migrants and their relatives in Eastern and Western Nzema traditional areas and current Nzema migrants in different parts of Côte d'Ivoire. A total of 16 informants were interviewed, using open-ended and semi-structured interview guides. The open-ended questions allowed informants to provide extensive and varied information while the semi-structured interview guide prevented informants from deviating from the subject matter and goals of the study. The number of informants was determined by the attainment of the saturation point. These informants were of different educational, occupational and age backgrounds. They were purposively selected on the merit of their knowledge and experience which the author deemed relevant for an in-depth and better understanding of the issue of Nzema migrants' integration into the Ivorian society. Snowballing was also used to identify and access specific categories of informants used in the study. With a historical lens, these authors sourced information from the lived experiences of Nzema return migrants, current migrants and relatives of migrants who were interviewed between August 2018 and January 2019. The oral data was supplemented with secondary sources of data to establish knowledge specific to Nzema migrants' integration into Ivorian society between 1893 and 1995.

The full integration or assimilation of a group of people into a society has been defined by identifying seven basic sub-processes that take place which are:

- (1) Change in cultural patterns; (2) a complete entry into the societal network of groups and institutions or societal structure through large-scale primary group relations with host society; (3) intermarriages; (4) development of the host society's sense of peoplehood or ethnicity; (5) lack of discriminatory behaviour by hosts to the new group; (6) lack of prejudiced attitude toward the new group; (7) lack of conflict with the host society on issues involving value and power in public or civic life (Anarfi, 1989: 163).

In this study, however, migrants were simply considered settled or integrated into their receiving communities if they had accommodation and jobs to earn them a living and also accepted into the



destination communities. Nzema migrants were considered accepted into the Ivorian society if they were not confronted with discrimination and harassment. The integration-related challenges of Nzema migrants in Côte d'Ivoire are discussed under historical epochs including 1893 to 1960 and the 1960s to 1990s.

### **The Colonial and Early Post-Colonial Periods (1893-1960)**

Some scholars have established that the Ghanaian economy during the colonial and early post-colonial periods grew at a phenomenal rate (Birmingham, 1966). Ghana's economy during this period was mostly dependent on the export of cocoa, timber, gold, diamond, bauxite and manganese. The economic growth of the country manifested in Ghana's per capita income which as of 1960 was identified to be US\$200 and relatively higher than those of most of the other developing countries in Africa like Nigeria's US\$88 per capita income in that same year (Birmingham, 1966: 197). Ghana's relative economic growth during this period made the country a destination for other West African migrants. Substantial numbers of people from Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Mali and Niger were recorded to have migrated to Ghana to take advantage of job avenues that the relatively viable economy had generated. Irrespective of this national economic growth and the rate of foreign immigration to Ghana, some Nzema people, particularly from the Western Nzema traditional area, emigrated to Côte d'Ivoire. Such Nzema people were compelled by factors associated with unsustainable economic businesses in trading, gold mining, and fishing at Nzemaland, Ghana to emigrate to Côte d'Ivoire. This could be linked to the idea of work and its associated positive (profits) and negative (loss) concepts (Pavanello, 1995: 36-56). According to Pavanello, the Nzema believe that "a man must always obtain a *nvasoe* [profit] from his own work. This is a profit in the form of a surplus product or of income or added value or of lasting property" (Pavanello, 1995: 38). When a loss was, on the contrary, derived from work or a job it became an unsustainable economic venture. Other factors that influenced the decision to emigrate from Nzemaland included Nzemaland's social and economic deprivations and the desire to seek educational support (Alibah, 2020: 45-66).

The choice of Côte d'Ivoire as a destination stemmed from the presence of the Apollo there. Oral information gathered from respondents revealed that during that period, almost all Nzema migrants contacted their relatives, friends or other facilitators at the destinations before

embarking on the journey. The relatives, friends, or other facilitators either accommodated the migrants in their own houses or aided them to secure a place to stay mostly in the Nzema communities in present day Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>2</sup> Such migrants were also helped to find a job either in the formal or informal sectors.<sup>3</sup> There were some migrants who also sought aid and guidance from certain people at their places of origin before emigrating. Randolph Benjamin Morkeh, owner of a number of *Ellentile* in the Nzema region from the 1940s was, for instance, noted to have been in the habit of interrogating some Nzema individuals who intended to board his *Ellentile* for their movement to Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>4</sup> Morkeh interrogated some potential migrants in his bid to know their motives for travelling, the specific place they intended to go to, and whether they knew someone there or not. He subsequently helped those who had relatives there but did not know how to contact them on arrival by giving them directions. For those who did not have anybody ready to offer any help, Morkeh aided them to find a place to stay (Quarm, personal communication, August 28, 2018).<sup>5</sup>

Nzema migrants of the colonial and early post-colonial periods contended with integration challenges that were related to the European presence in Côte d'Ivoire. The Nzema- Ebrie conflicts in the nineteenth century constituted one of such challenges. The conflicts were generated from the Ebrie's efforts to curtail the Nzema's attempts and determination to take over trading activities particularly with the Europeans in their region. Apparently, hinterland people like the Ebrie wanted to obtain European manufactured goods directly from the Europeans without middlemen like Nzema traders.<sup>6</sup> This was similar to the Fante-Asante skirmishes in the central zone of the Gold Coast in which case the Asante struggled to have direct trade contacts with the European merchants who operated mostly along the coastal areas of the country. In the first event of the Nzema-Ebrie skirmishes which, according to M'Bala, took place in 1886, a

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<sup>2</sup> The Nzema /Apollo communities in Côte d'Ivoire included Kyepim (Tiapoum), Nuamou, Allonguonu, Flambou(Frambo), Ngyim(Nguieme), Enuenta(Abounda), Nzobenu, Asuai(Assoue), and Aiboko, Grand Bassam and Assinie. These Nzema communities were placed under French jurisdiction as part of Côte d'Ivoire through an 1893 Anglo-Franco Boundary Agreement.

<sup>3</sup> This is related to instances where individual migrants invited their relatives and friends to engage in businesses with them at their destinations.

<sup>4</sup> According to informants of the study, *Ellentile* was an engine powered big boat.

<sup>5</sup> Apparently, Morkeh had been in the transport business for a long time and had come into contact with a lot of migrants, some of whom he had information about in regard to their destinations and conditions of life.

<sup>6</sup> The Ebrie are an Akan group of people living in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.



Warlord (*Safohene*) of Grand-Bassam called Blay Kokole and some Apollo traders sent some European manufactured goods to the land of the Ebrie to sell but they were killed. The Apollonians subsequently allied with some Europeans to also kill some Ebrie people (M'Bala, personal communication, January 12, 2019). What is not clear in this tradition, however, is the particular Europeans involved in this event, whether they were French or British. These authors are, however, inclined towards the French being the Europeans involved in this event because of two reasons. First, the Nzema settlers of Nguieme, Abouanda, Tiapoum and other Nzema villages in Côte d'Ivoire during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were noted to have disliked the British due to the harsh treatment meted out to them by some of their officials. Second, per a 28 September 1843 agreement, the French were supposed to be the only Europeans to be involved in trading activities with the inhabitants of Côte d'Ivoire and also offer them protection from all attacks.

In a second event, which M'Bala again indicated occurred in 1894, another Nzema man called Yamike Buah went to the land of the Ebrie to settle and trade, but he was killed together with his wife whose head was cut and placed on his laps. In a third instance, Nzema warriors, including Bognan Koasi Ehwie and Ahoea Ekyie Acquah living in the land of the Ebrie, got wind of the Ebrie's intention to attack the Nzema. To avert any surprises, the Nzema rather launched an unexpected attack on the Ebrie killing some of their men including their *Safohene* (M'Bala, personal communication, January 12, 2019).<sup>7</sup> This integration challenge of the Nzema migrants was not related to an economic downturn at their destination.

The French colonial government's coercive labour and military recruitment policies were another source of integration challenge for the Nzema in Côte d'Ivoire. Waijenburg explained that scarcity of labour created labour-market challenges of a difficulty to meet a rising demand for African wage workers and high price for labour. To offset these challenges, Waijenburg highlighted that nearly all colonial governments introduced "coercive labour market institutions such as land alienation programs [sic], labour[sic] recruitment, and vagrancy laws..." (Waijenburg, 2015: 5). Waijenburg, again, indicated that African colonial states resorted to labour taxes and other forms of labour coercion to indirectly support their insufficient budgets. In French

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<sup>7</sup> The warlike nature of the Nzema during this period was noted by Bernard Schnapper who was cited by Abrima et al in the following French words: '... *le groupe des Nzima ou Zema appelé Apollonien par les voyageurs européens, qui avaient de singulières aptitudes à la fois pour la pêche, le commerce et la guerre.*' Literally, the French text above means: the group of Nzema christened Apollonian by the European explorers, had a unique aptitude for fishing, trading and warfare.

Africa, there were the labour taxes otherwise referred to as the *corvée* or *préstations* by which Africans were supposed to work for a fixed number of days per year on local public work projects without pay. Waijenburg further stated: “Under the *préstations* decree of November 1912, adult male inhabitants of French West Africa in good health became officially subject to an annual tax that was to be paid in the form of labour [sic] on public work projects” (Waijenburg, 2015: 17). An informant commented on forced labour for the cultivation of strategic products like rubber in Côte d’Ivoire as follows: “...during the First World War, the French forced their African subjects to produce rubber in greater quantities. The labourers were made to work from morning to evening because chiefs had to meet their expected targets of production” (Amihere, personal communication, August 30, 2018).

In the same light, the French used coercion to conscript the colonised Africans into military service as evident in the following:

In French Black Africa, a Decree of 1912 aimed at creating a permanent black army made military service for four years compulsory for all African males between the ages of 20 and 28. The aim was to replace garrison troops in Algeria with black African troops so that the former would be available for service in Europe in the eventuality of war. If such a war were [sic] prolonged, our African forces would constitute an almost indefinite reserve, the source of which is beyond the reach of the adversary (Adu-Boahen, 1990: 293).

To achieve the set objectives for creating black African troops as indicated in the above text, the Africans in French West Africa, of which Côte d’Ivoire was no exception, had their human rights violated. This was evident in a report that ‘rebels were impressed into the army, flogged or even hanged ... (Adu-Boahen, 1990: 300). A return migrant confirmed the forced military recruitment in Côte d’Ivoire in the following words:

there was forced screening and selection of the strong young men in Côte d’Ivoire for military training in Dakar during the First World War. My brother Gyane Kulechie was even selected. This was during Awulae Annor Adjaye II of Western Nzema’s reign. Since we were of Awulae Annor Adjaye’s royal family, he wrote to the French government that Gyane Kulechie was not an Ivorian national so he

should be brought back. Before he was brought back, he had already spent a month at the military camp. I witnessed this situation of forced military recruitments during my childhood days at Tiapoum where I stayed with my grand-mother for some time (Amihere, 30 August 2018).

Due to the inconveniences the French colonial government imposed on its subjects through its policies, some of the Nzema in Côte d'Ivoire tried as much as possible to alert each other against forced labour. They did this by shouting the Nzema words, *Iboro o* upon sighting an approaching French official. *Iboro* is synonymous in meaning with the Nzema word for the colour red. Thus the wearing of the red caps by the French officials was used to identify them (Amihere, personal communication, August 30, 2018). It has been established that the application of coercion in the conscription of French colonised subjects for labour and military purposes resulted in voluntary emigrations to neighbouring British territories. This is what Asiwaju is recorded to have described as 'protest migrations' (Adu-Boahen, 1990: 301). This notwithstanding, information gathered for this study did not reveal any other instance of the Nzema returning from Côte d'Ivoire to Nzemaland in Ghana during this period besides the case of Gyane Kulechie mentioned above. These authors opine that irrespective of the element of oppression that frustrated the integration of migrants into the Ivorian society, there was no large scale return of Nzema migrants to Nzemaland, Ghana due to the attractive factors at the destination areas.<sup>8</sup> In addition, that integration challenge had no link with the destination country's relatively non-flourishing economy at that time.

### **The Post-Colonial Era (1960s to the 1990s)**

Between the mid-1960s and early 1980s when the Ghanaian economy collapsed, the Ivorian economy boomed. Eberhardt and Teal confirmed the economic stability in Côte d'Ivoire during this period in the following statement: "... from 1960 to 1980 Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed more or less uninterrupted growth such that by 1980 real GDP per person was twice its 1960s level" (Eberhardt

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<sup>8</sup>One of the attractive factors at the destination was the presence of the Apollo there. The Apollo provided relatives and friends at the communities of origin with information about the abundance of food and other social amenities. The second attractive factor was the existence of the Tano Lagoon and rivers including the Tano, Comoe, Bia, and Mezzan which abounded in fish and gold deposits and attracted fishermen, fish sellers and gold miners and blacksmiths respectively.

and Teal, 2010: 34). Apparently, the value of the FCFA was relatively higher than the cedi and so cost of living was lower in Côte d'Ivoire than in Ghana during that period. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire during that period influenced the statement, *Nohan (Felanze) yefe* literally meaning, "over there (Côte d'Ivoire) is sweet." This statement was commonly made by migrants in response to the question bordering on the standard of living in Côte d'Ivoire. About 90% of the respondents of this study in Nzemaland corroborated this view. Apparently, the 'sweetness' of Côte d'Ivoire from the 1960s to 1980s was all about the availability of food, meat, drinks, other essential goods, social amenities, cheap transportation fares and entertaining packages which were all characteristics of a stable economic growth. The low cost of living and the relatively higher value of FCFA in Côte d'Ivoire enabled migrants to acquire personal belongings that attracted others to emigrate from Nzemaland. Meah clearly emphasised that "if one was a woman in Nzemaland and she did not travel to Abidjan, then she was not aware of the trend at the time" (Meah, personal communication, September 23, 2018). From the 1960s, therefore, Côte d'Ivoire's booming economy attracted a relatively large number of indigenes of Nzemaland in Ghana.

Irrespective of Côte d'Ivoire's economic boom, liberal immigration policy after independence and the seemingly close cultural affinity between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, Ghanaian migrants in Côte d'Ivoire were generally confronted with challenges that frustrated their integration into the host society.<sup>9</sup> The challenges / frustrations Nzema migrants experienced in Ivorian communities other than the Nzema communities in Côte d'Ivoire are subsequently discussed under themes including accommodation, jobs, Ivorians' sense of peoplehood and prejudiced attitude towards the migrants, and conflicts.

### **Accommodation**

Some newly arrived Nzema migrants in Côte d'Ivoire were confronted with accommodation-related challenges. The migrants mostly rented wooden houses that were of a poor quality. According to Anarfi, the wooden houses were sub-standard as they were constructed with 'poor quality wood infested with termites' (Anarfi, 1989: 111). More challenging was the situation where female migrants, in their bid to reduce cost, shared rented rooms. In such situations,

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<sup>9</sup> President Felix Houphouet Boigny was compelled by the nation's small labour force to encourage immigration from Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal and Ghana.

between five and eight female migrants got together as a group, hired a single room in a wooden house and lived in. Anarfi's 1989 study corroborates this development as he emphasised in the words below:

Interestingly, among the old migrants the highest room density is five persons per room, whereas densities of 8 to 15 persons per room are recorded among the intermediate and recent migrants. This is so because the more recent migrants have to content themselves with shared accommodation until they secure good jobs (Anarfi, 1989: 121-123).

Benle shared the same view in the following words: "...women who did not have relatives at the destination area could come together in a number of about five and hire a room in a wooden house" (Benle, personal communication, August 27, 2018). Problems associated with this type of accommodation were lack of privacy for individual tenants, misunderstandings and quarrels over use of each other's personal effects. Some co-tenants got ejected for their inability to pay the rent while others ran away without paying the rent for lack of money.

Some of these frustrated Nzema migrants of that period usually relied on agents of an institutionalised support system some of whom created further problems for the migrants. This institutionalised system of support generally involved drivers, the migrants, immigration officials, other law enforcement agents and movement facilitators in the two countries. Besides helping irregular migrants to cross borders, the movement facilitators were ready to accommodate stranded migrants and take them into their employ. Such migrants were made to offer their labour services for a given period without pay to cover the initial rent. Even so, some of these migrants were exploited and unfairly treated as there were instances where some agents cheated their clients over payment of rent and interest on money lent to them.

## **Jobs**

On arrival at their destinations, some young female migrants (between 5 years and 15 years) were exploited by some female movement facilitators who maltreated them and used them for jobs other than what was initially agreed upon. A respondent intimated that her aunt sent her to

Marcory in Abidjan in the 1970s at the tender age of 5 years under the pretext of sending her to school and to later enable her to learn a vocation. She narrated her ordeal as follows:

My aunt did not send me to school. She did not even feed us as expected though I worked for her in her food business. She used us like slaves. I wanted to return home but she refused. I ran away and stayed with another woman. My situation while with that woman was equally not good. I got pregnant by a man who did not accept that responsibility and I later managed to save some small amount of money and returned home with the help of my father's nephew (Eshiman, personal communication, September 25, 2018).

Such situations compelled some of the young girls to engage in prostitution as emphasised by Ayah who intimated that “young Nzema girls were sent to Côte d’Ivoire to serve as helps in various trades but upon reaching there, they were turned into prostitutes” (Ayah, personal communication, August 29, 2018). Although these young Nzema girls were claimed not to have engaged in prostitution as openly and predominantly as the Krobo girls of eastern Ghana, some returned to Ghana with HIV/AIDS disease which was believed to have been contracted mainly through prostitution.<sup>10</sup> Some male Nzema migrants who also returned to their home communities in Ghana with HIV/AIDS disease. These men, as could be inferred from Anarfi's study, played pimps for the prostitutes who described them as ‘husbands’ (Anarfi, 1989: 136). These ‘husbands’ had free access to their prostitute ‘wives’ after they had closed from work. Acquah-Cudjoe has confirmed that some Eastern Nzema males who went to Côte d’Ivoire contracted HIV/AIDS mainly through prostitution (Acquah-Cudjoe, 2004). Implicitly, the mode of contracting HIV/AIDS in the circumstances mentioned above was sex although from the medical perspective, there were other modes of contracting the disease. Deductively, the accommodation and job-related difficulties Nzema migrants faced in their bid to become integrated into their host society were not the results of a non-flourishing economy.

## **The Ivorians’ Sense of Peoplehood**

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<sup>10</sup> All respondents of this study alluded to that idea.



The Ivorians' sense of peoplehood culminated in their harassment of migrants due to their non-possession of Ivorian identity cards (ID) or resident permits. This became intense from 1993 when Henri Konan Bedie took over as the Ivorian President. Konan Bedie promulgated the idea of '*Ivoirité*' or '*Ivorian-ness*' which distinguished between 'pure' or 'superior' and 'inferior' Ivorians.<sup>11</sup> Non-possession of Ivorian identity cards or resident permits became a source of frustration to migrants. As required in other countries in the sub-region, there were two legal documents: *carte d'identité Ivoirien* (Ivorian Identity card) and *carte de séjour* (residence permit) which one needed in order to reside peacefully in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, most of the newly arrived Nzema migrants were irregular migrants who did not have IDs or residence permits and, therefore, became constant victims of the Ivorian law enforcement agents. As gathered from this study's respondents, there were frequent checks for identity cards and resident permits, actions that always resulted in indiscriminate arrests by the Ivorian police and soldiers. These checks were conducted at different times. There was what was called 'Rough' which was unexpected patrols between 11pm and 12 mid-night mostly on Saturdays when people were enjoying their Saturday night (*Samedi soir*). People without permits could be detained for days and were released usually after paying some money to the officials.<sup>13</sup> A respondent who visited his brother in Abidjan in the 1980s once went to a funeral ground and got rounded up together with some others for not possessing IDs. In another instance, a male victim got arrested in the 1990s but was luckily released because he made some remarks in Nzema language. Apparently, there was an Apollo among the policemen, and he facilitated his release (Blay, personal communication, August 23, 2018). This was apparently so because the Apollo were recognised as legal residents of Côte d'Ivoire due to the 1893 Anglo-Franco boundary agreement.

'Monter' was a jargon used to refer to another type of rampant ID checks in Côte d'Ivoire. This happened at any time of the day when unexpectedly, policemen blew whistles and commanded suspected illegal migrants to board a bus without hesitation. Upon arriving at the

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<sup>11</sup> 'Pure' or 'superior' Ivorians were people with two parents born in Côte d'Ivoire while children of immigrants irrespective of the fact that they were born in Côte d'Ivoire were considered as 'inferior' Ivorians. Konan Bedie encouraged xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants in the country.

<sup>12</sup> The identity card which could be obtained if one had an Ivorian birth certificate could be renewed after ten years while the resident permit was renewed annually.

<sup>13</sup> Whether the monies taken from the victims were used to process their resident permits or not could, however, not be established.

police station, victims who could neither produce IDs nor pay for their release could be asked to choose between being detained in cells or cleaning a bus. A respondent who was in Côte d'Ivoire in 1979 was a victim of such a situation. He chose to clean a bus and was released afterwards. Because subsequent arrests for the same offence were still possible after his release, he decided to return to Elubo in Ghana in 1983. The rampant arrests were described by another respondent in the following words:

In Côte d'Ivoire in those days, people were turned into dogs (*beye woke twea*) with the frequent whistling from the police. If a whistle was blown and one did not stop, trouble. People were always being rounded up and sent to the police station where they were brutalised for not possessing IDs (Awuah I, personal communication, August 25, 2018).

Both male and female migrants were victims of this situation, but the female victims were usually not detained for relatively longer duration as their male counterparts. The explanation for this situation, as postulated by a respondent of the study, was that the women usually bought their freedom in kind (Erzuah, personal communication, September 22, 2018). What worsened the situation of some of the Ghanaian migrants in general was their inability to speak the French language. This easily gave their foreign identity out.<sup>14</sup> Such lived experiences were not connected to the state of affairs of the Ivorian economy.

### **Ivoriens' Prejudiced Attitudes**

Unfortunately for Ghanaians in general, the indigenous Ivorians exhibited prejudiced attitudes against them. This manifested in their lack of respect and discrimination for and against the post-1893 migrants. Oral data gathered indicated that Ghanaians were initially respected in Côte d'Ivoire, but the indecent and criminal activities of some migrants from the 1990s culminated in their loss of respect. The indecent and criminal activities that Ghanaians engaged in included vices such as female prostitution, gambling, thievery, alcoholism, and smoking of marijuana. The serious aspect of this situation was that though it was not all Ghanaians who engaged in such

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<sup>14</sup> Such victims of the frequent ID checks by the police and soldiers could not communicate and explain themselves to the officials resulting in their worsened plight.

vices, all Ghanaians were stigmatised (Malenzie, personal communication, September 24, 2018). An indication from oral data was that the disrespect and discrimination against Ghanaians started after President Felix Houphouet Boigny's reign, that is after 1993 (Nwolley, personal communication, August 27, 2018). Given that Anarfi's 1989 study revealed instances of such disrespect and discrimination against the Ghanaians, these authors conclude that the development started in the 1980s but became intensified in the 1990s. This conclusion is also based on a September 1985 football match saga between two teams of the two countries which resulted in gross disrespect, maltreatment and discrimination of and against Ghanaians in general.<sup>15</sup>

The Ivorians expressed their disrespect for the Ghanaian in phrases such as *La Ghanéenne la* and *La Ghanéene comme ça* meaning 'that Ghanaian'. Some Nzema, like all other Ghanaians, suffered discrimination and unfair treatments in different aspects of their lives at their homes, workplaces, and on the streets in general. There were, therefore, instances where some Nzema migrants suffered allegations of thievery, misappropriation of funds, and dishonesty all of which resulted in beatings, imprisonments, and loss of jobs. None of the respondents of this study mentioned specific names of such Nzema victims due to two reasons: they had either forgotten the exact names or wished to conceal the identity of such people. Undoubtedly, such conditions which were not economically induced hindered a peaceful integration of the Nzema immigrants.

## **Conflicts**

Conflicts between some individual Ivorians and Nzema over issues pertaining to money, jobs and amorous relationships resulted in the former's harassment of the latter. Some Ivorian individuals were believed to have subjected some Nzema migrants to spiritually invoked curses of diseases and deaths during the era of the postcolony. This spiritual harassment of those Nzema migrants hinged on the extent of their acceptance into the host society. There was a case where a migrant had to return home (Nzemaland in Ghana) due to an illness after having worked in Abidjan in various capacities including those of Assistant Engineer, Engineer, and Rig Mechanic. The victim claimed his pain was only felt at the workplace as a Rig Mechanic. At home he felt no pain which suggested to him that a spell had been cast on him at his work place because someone did not

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<sup>15</sup> In September 1985, there was a football match between two teams of the two countries in which the Ghanaians lost and culminated in a violent situation. Coupled with the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire after the reign of President Houphouet Boigny in 1993, the situation became intense.

want him to occupy that position for reasons best known to him or her (Kwoffie, personal communication, August 29, 2018).<sup>16</sup> Along the line of amorous relationships, an informant indicated that if a woman or man maintained such a relationship with another person's spouse, the offender was killed through spiritual means (Yameke, personal communication, September 21, 2018). Small gods including *gbogbo* and *tasion* were invoked to curse and inflict diseases and deaths on offenders over issues including false witnessing, adultery, and other immoral acts (Arthur, personal communication, August 29, 2018). Some male respondents of this study confirmed this situation by disclosing that they stayed away from Nzema women in Côte d'Ivoire to avoid being killed because the Ivorian men liked and maintained amorous relationships with Nzema women a lot. The psychological effects of such circumstances on migrants cannot be denied as confirmed by an informant who disclosed his dilemma and fear of proposing to an Nzema lady that he was so much in love with. Hence, the spiritual harassment of some Nzema migrants over jobs, money, Nzema women, and immoral acts hindered peaceful integration of some Nzema migrants.

### **Some Settlement Coping Strategies of the Migrants in the Post-Colonial Period**

To mitigate the frustrations of Nzema immigrants of Côte d'Ivoire during the post-colonial period, some coping strategies were adopted. Learning how to speak French language was one of the three major strategies some Nzema migrants adopted as solution to their integration challenges in the post-colonial times. This worked for migrants, taking into consideration the fact that per the French colonial policy of Assimilation, knowledge in French language was made compulsory in all the major towns of Côte d'Ivoire. French language was the official and commonest language in the whole of Côte d'Ivoire. The important role that knowledge of a destination's language plays in the integration of migrants into the host society has been overly examined. Some scholars have shown that both fluency in the language of the destination country and the ability to learn it quickly play a role in the transfer of existing human capital to a foreign country and generally boost the immigrant's success at the destination country's labour market (Adsera and Pytlikova, 2012: 2; Dustman, 1994; Dustman and Soest, 2001; Chiswick and Miller, 2002; Dustman and Fabbri,

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<sup>16</sup> At the time he granted the interview, he had returned to Anokyi in Ghana. He was still treating his illness and had significantly recovered.

2003; Bleakley and Chin, 2004; Chiswick, and Miller, 2007; Chiswick, and Miller, 2010). Adsera, particularly, stated:

Proficiency in the destination country language may make it easier to get a visa or qualify for permanent residency and, as a result, may facilitate migration itself. Language proficiency also helps new arrivals navigate local institutions and understand their rights to employment and government benefits. Finally, language proficiency may ease migrants' social adaptation and integration (Adsera, 2015: 2).

The Nzema migrants, like other Ghanaians whose practical experiences had made them realise the benefits they could derive from their knowledge of French language at different points in their lives, learnt the language. Some of the educated ones learnt it formally in school whereas the uneducated, particularly the female migrants, learnt it informally through their daily activities. Anarfi commented on the informal method of learning French in Côte d'Ivoire as follows: "The speed with which the Ghanaian women pick the language, considering their low educational background, is very surprising. Their major profession, which brings them into contact with the Ivoiriens [sic] and other French-speaking nationals, is a contributing factor" (Anarfi, 1989:164-165).<sup>17</sup> Nzema migrants hardly spoke the Nzema language in public, they referred to themselves as Apollo, and most of them also managed to secure IDs that signified that they were Ivorians and legally permitted to reside at any part of Côte d'Ivoire. This explains Anarfi's disappointment at the relatively lower percentage of female migrants of Western Ghana that his study recorded in 1989. Anarfi expressed his disappointment about the percentage of migrants from the Western and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana that his study found in Côte d'Ivoire. Because the two regions were the closest to Côte d'Ivoire, Anarfi expected more migrants from there than the statistics he gathered showed (Anarfi, 1989: 245-248).

The Nzema migrants also relied on existing Ghanaian associations to get themselves assimilated into the destination society. These associations mostly initiated by the older migrants were usually organised along lines of Ghanaian ethnic groups, townships, professions, and

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<sup>17</sup> In oral interviews with some of the Apollo, Anarfi indicated that they claimed they were Apollo and not Ghanaians. By identifying themselves as Apollo, such post-1893 migrants legalised their presence there and changed their identity as Ghanaians.

religions. There were, therefore, the Bonyere, Tikobo, and Half Assini towns' associations. Information gathered from respondents of this study revealed that in addition to the above mentioned kinds of association, the Nzema migrants also formed cultural or musical groups with names such as 'Skin Pain', 'Life', 'Band Ndzie', and 'Ampedu' which were meant for entertainment purposes during different occasions. Generally, however, all these associations were formed for welfare reasons. Members helped and sympathised with each other in difficult times such as death, visiting each other in times of sickness, contributing to send very sick migrants or the corpses of deceased migrants to their hometown and bailing each other out of police custody. Indications from oral information suggested that associations like *Ekor Ye* (literally meaning Unity) which embraced all Ghanaians who wished to be members between 1983 and 1984, aided new migrants to secure resident permits. The association unfortunately collapsed in 1985 (Malenzie, personal communication, September 22, 2018), possibly due to the fear of being victimised in the heat of the football match-related violence of 1985.

The third strategy, mainly utilised by the female migrants, was intermarriages between them and Ivorian men. Most Ivorian men preferred the Nzema women in amorous relationships, because they were known to be of a good marriage material in addition to being hardworking. Some of the Ivorian males in these conjugal relationships happened to be influential persons and, therefore, offered the women some form of security against harassments and other forms of challenges they had been encountering. This conforms to Marcson's statement that: "Intermarriage in sociological writings, has come to represent the surest index of assimilation" (Marcson, 1950:75). Migrants who adopted these coping strategies succeeded in becoming settled in the host communities. They engaged in profitable businesses and were accommodated in relatively better houses compared to the wooden houses new migrants rented.

## **Conclusion**

This micro study has justified Sarantakos' moderate postmodernist theory by unearthing new realities in international migrants' integration into their destination societies in West Africa. The study has established that during the colonial era, newly arrived Nzema migrants relied on their networks (relatives and friends at the destination areas as well as other facilitators) to find jobs and accommodation that enabled them to get settled and integrated into the Nzema communities



at the destination country. The major integration challenge was the job-related clashes with the Ebrie for monopoly over trade with Europeans and other challenges related to the French colonial government policy of compulsory labour and military recruitments. The integration challenges of Nzema migrants in Côte d'Ivoire during the colonial period were, therefore, not attached to the country's economic situation. In the post-colonial period, particularly between 1960 and 1980s when Côte d'Ivoire's economy boomed, some Nzema immigrants in that country experienced accommodation and job-related challenges due to either their lack of networks at the destinations or the exploits of their facilitators. Subsequently from 1985, the migrants encountered integration challenges including physical and spiritual assaults, disrespect and discrimination principally due to Ivorians' sense of peoplehood, prejudiced attitudes against the Ghanaian in general, and conflicts. As solutions to most of these trans-national integration challenges, Nzema migrants learnt French language, joined Ghanaian welfare associations for varied support, while single female migrants intermarried with Ivorian males. These strategies enabled them to evade some hindrances in their way of getting integrated into the receiving communities.

Evenso, this study has revealed that migrants' challenges are not always tied to the economy of the host country. Even when the economy of the host country flourishes, migrants can still be susceptible to integration challenges. This study highlights specific instances of such cases in the past. The study is, therefore, also significant for providing a historical perspective to the phenomenon of migrants' integration into their destination societies.

The usefulness of the study to policy makers is embedded in the fact that it substantiates the integration challenges of migrants in the sub-region irrespective of the 1979 ECOWAS protocols. Since migrants' smooth integration can serve as an anchor for the migration-development nexus, the problems associated with it must be addressed. Migrants can also take a cue from the study along the line of establishing networks at their chosen destinations before moving to those locations.

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