

## **Opening up New Economic Frontiers: Migrants, Rural Integration and Conflicts in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire**

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This paper examines the role of migrants in the expansion of the market and commodification within rural areas, and the political implications for notions of local and national citizenship. The articulation of customary land tenure under colonial rule recognised chiefs as the ultimate owners of land, who alone had the recognised right to sell land. Chiefs could only sell land to foreign investors and migrants, since, their subjects have user rights in land, established through occupation and development, Colonial taxation and forced labour policies assured the movement of labour into the main export producing areas, including both trans-border regional migrations and movements from different areas within the colony. Rich migrants with capital to could move into new frontier districts investing in both land and labour for accumulation, as the migrant cocoa farmers of south-eastern Ghana or the Baule planters of Côte d'Ivoire. Where there was limited capital formation, migrants were often welcomed in the early stages of frontier development, and given land on favourable terms to encourage further migrations of land investors and of labourers. Neo-customary institutions were often created to facilitate this integration of migrants, infusing economic transactions with elements of moral economy, and reflecting and ramifying existing political relations and political control. The institutions for the transaction of resources also reflect the wealth and power of different categories of migrants. As land and natural resources became scarce, migrants were often perceived by the indigenes as having appropriated their resources, particularly by youth who were the first category to suffer from growing shortage and less access to resources. This often leads to complex struggles between chiefs, migrants and youth over resources and notions of citizenship. Chiefs and elders can manipulate popular resentment of migrants to extract more revenues from the migrants and make them more compliant. But they risk the loss of revenues from the expulsion or relocation of migrants to other areas, or from the re-capture of resources by locals from migrants, since payments cannot be extracted from locals for the use of resources. This paper examines the tensions, conflicts and the changing institutional framework of incorporation of differentiated categories of migrants into the political and economic life of rural settlements, drawing on ethnographic case studies from my work in Ghana and the literature on Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.