

large number of factual errors. It is full of contradictions, and it ignores much of the fine literature that has already been published on Sierra Leone. In addition, there are far too many typographical mistakes for a publication of this type. Let me note but a few examples of these errors and problems. The description of the founders of the All People's Congress (A.P.C.) is wrong, although this event has been well covered by, for example, Martin Kilson and John Cartwright (whose work he appears not to know); the United People's Party (U.P.P.) was not organised by Siaka Stevens, Albert Margai, Berthan Macaulay, and Gershon Collier, but by Cyril Rogers Wright, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, and others. It may be that Roberts is confusing the U.P.P. (which was formed in 1954) with the P.N.P., which was established in 1958 by Albert Margai, Siaka Stevens, and others disenchanted with S.L.P.P. conservatism and eager to participate in power themselves.

While the S.L.P.P. had its strongest base of support among the Mende, it was not monopolised by them under the leadership of Milton Margai (who worked hard to achieve ethnic balance in the party), but rather became increasingly so under the leadership of his brother Albert, who became Prime Minister and head of the S.L.P.P. after Milton's death. The general election in 1967 was not a vote on the republican constitution, but focused on a wide range of issues separating the S.L.P.P. and A.P.C., including nationalisation of external investments (especially diamond mining), increased legal rights for rural people, populism *versus* chiefly power, corruption, the one-party state, and so on. Even the issue of the one-party state, which Roberts sees as the focus of the 1967 election, was not as central as he implies, since the S.L.P.P. had withdrawn the one-party bill from Parliament in the face of widespread opposition even within its own ranks.

Perhaps the most distressing material relates to the author's discussion of the *coup d'état* in 1967. The election that year was one of the few in African history in which an opposition party out-voted the party in power. As a result the Governor-General called upon Siaka Stevens to form the Government and he was sworn in as Prime minister. Whether Sir Henry Lightfoot-Boston was correct in his assumption that Stevens had the support of a majority of M.P.s may be open to question (although the evidence suggests that he would have been backed by at least 34 of the 66 M.P.s), certainly this issue could have been resolved by a vote of confidence in Parliament. That the military intervened to overthrow the Government, with the encouragement of some major S.L.P.P. leaders who sought to thwart the outcome of the election, was a major turning point in Sierra Leone's history. These events are discussed at length by Thomas S. Cox, and it is too bad that Roberts does not come to grips with them. As it is he asserts that: 'In this milieu of anxiety, dissatisfaction, confusion and frustration, the military, at the time, appeared to be the only coordinated and disciplined group to give direction' (p. 105). That was certainly not the case.

The Governor-General acted decisively given the facts of the 1967 election results, his duties under the constitution, and in keeping with parliamentary tradition. The A.P.C. was prepared and able to rule. There was widespread popular support, as demonstrated by the celebrations in the streets of Freetown when the election results were known, and the outrage at the announcement

of the coup. The military and the police were never able to gain substantial public legitimacy for their action in overthrowing the Government. Furthermore, to suggest that the situation was in any way like that in Uganda, as Roberts does, citing Ali Mazrui, is to do a great disservice to the long history of democratic elections in Sierra Leone, and the care with which those of 1967 were carried out in a context of intense political competition between the A.P.C. and S.L.P.P.

Roberts is correct when he talks about the growing violence in Sierra Leone politics, especially as demonstrated in the general elections of 1973 and 1977. In the last chapter, he sets out some prescriptions for the future, including wider use of Mende and Temne in the schools, civic education, equitable development, and responsible leadership.

In the final analysis, however, *The Anguish of Third World Independence* is badly flawed. It is very sad to realise that generations of students in Sierra Leone and elsewhere will be using and depending on this most recent general study of that country, thereby perpetuating the errors which appear in this publication as facts.

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**Village Communities and the State: changing relations among the Maka of Southeastern Cameroon since the colonial conquest** by PETER GESCHIERE

London, Kegan Paul, 1982. Pp. xvi + 512. £25.00.

This fascinating study about the Maka, a Bantu-speaking people in South-Eastern Cameroon, focuses on changes in social relationships in the villages, particularly as regards authority, and views them as the result of large-scale developments in this West African state.

Peter Geschiere, who is both an historian and an anthropologist, carried out fieldwork in 1971, 1973, and 1980. He starts off with a description of the pre-colonial situation, when patriliney was the most effective, and almost only, social unit. The period was characterised by a lineage mode of production. Authority in those days was not based on the production or allocation of goods for daily use, but on the monopolisation by the elders of the distribution of 'prestige goods' which were used for bride price. Geschiere emphasises the ambivalence of the traditional structure. Although people were very ambitious to acquire political status and prestige, egalitarian tendencies always remained strong, and several mechanisms existed to reduce the power of individuals. One of these techniques was gossip and the use of witchcraft (*djambe*) accusations.

The arrival of the Germans and, later on, the French, marked the beginning of a new era which deeply affected these rural communities. In an attempt to get the 'unruly' Maka under control the colonisers forced them to settle down in new villages, which consisted of several patrilineal units, alongside the road. The Germans created the new post of village chief, whose main function was to mediate between coloniser and colonised.

The author describes the colonial period as a continuous, often desperate,

effort to involve the Maka in the capitalist market system. At the beginning these attempts were accompanied by brutal force or by more subtle means such as the imposition of taxes. After World War I, when the French took over, the same policy was continued under the euphemism of *mis en valeur*. Geschiere emphasises that the acephalous Maka remained extremely elusive, and the colonial economy found no existing forms of surplus production among them to use as bridgeheads. The state had to create such points of support and became its own economic base (*'économie de traite'*). The cultivation of cash crops, especially coffee and cocoa, developed very slowly into an activity with its own incentives after 1945.

These economic developments did not drastically change the social organisation in the villages, however, because the abundance of community-owned land prevented the rise of a *kulak* class. Authority also remained an ambiguous affair. The chiefs had no real power basis, because the villagers still thought in terms of lineage loyalties. Moreover, their position was hardly strengthened by the state since they were seen as mere executors of orders from above. The author shows, through a number of cases, that the chiefs were not able to command respect from their fellow villagers.

Real power, according to Geschiere, lay with those who had been able to secure a position in the state bureaucracy. In part 4 he attempts to demonstrate that the state of Cameroon has been completely organised from the top and has made itself independent from the masses. The population has become politically passive, there is no question of their mobilisation, all communication is one-way – from top to bottom – the party is almighty, and political success, therefore, does not depend on support from the population but on the approval of a political élite. The result, is that the 'intellectuals' are the new (absent) leaders in the Maka villages. They are 'reluctant brokers', because the exchange of services has become very unequal as the villagers no longer have things to offer which the élite needs. Geschiere expects this alienation to increase as the political élite tend to settle permanently in the towns. The author seems to largely endorse Jean-François Bayart's description of Cameroon as an extremely centralised and clientelist state, although he does criticise him on several other points.

This is only a rough sketch of the contents of this rich and diverse book. It deals with topics as varied as colonial history, kinship economics, authority, education, jurisdiction, and witchcraft accusations. It further contains substantial theoretical discussions. Topics which receive less attention are the position of women, the rôle of missionaries, problems of migration, political corruption, and the influence of religion. The author's greatest merit is that he has succeeded in linking developments in the villages to national politics, doing so from a broad historical perspective. In the process he provides an excellent case-study of the effects of colonial and post-colonial policy in Africa.

A few words about the author's theoretical perspective. He assures the reader that he wants to view the developments among the Maka in the light of recent theories about the articulation of modes of production which derive mainly from French Marxist anthropologists, notably Claude Meillassoux, P.-P. Rey, and E. Terray. However, when it comes to understanding and explaining the present situation in the Maka villages and in Cameroon society in general, the

author hardly draws upon the theory of articulation, but rather on transactionalist ideas about political machinations and competition between individuals. Social reality is seen rather in Baileyan terms as an arena in which prizes can be won. The author cogently argues that power does not stem from the monopolisation of production and the distribution of goods, but from political influence. Moreover, Geschiere himself expresses doubts about whether Maka society can be regarded as being 'articulated' with the larger economy. Goran Hyden's recent view, based on Tanzanian experience, that the peasantry has maintained its independence *vis-à-vis* the state, seems to apply to some extent to the Maka as well. In his epilogue, Geschiere refers to 'a degree of autarky', and to the fact that 'the market mechanism proves by no means sufficient to compel the peasants to offer their products and ultimately their own labour as commodities on the market' (p. 347).

It is my impression that Geschiere started off his study with a transactionalist point of view, but had become an adherent of the 'articulation school' by the time he finished it. That does not alter the fact that the transactionalist view provides the best answers to the basic questions raised by this interesting study. My only criticism here is that the author seems to take a too materialist view of transactionalism. When he describes the new élite as 'reluctant brokers' because they expect no valuable rewards from the villagers, he seems to underestimate the importance of local prestige and admiration as a real 'prize'. I tend to believe that the 'intellectuals' are not reluctant brokers but just *behave* that way. The attachment to the home village is probably greater and runs deeper than Geschiere suggests.

*Village Communities and the State: changing relations among the Maka of Southeastern Cameroon since the colonial conquest* is a translation of a Dutch Ph.D. thesis which I happen to know. The English version misses interesting material from the original. Passages which looked too sensitive in a political sense have been excluded or altered. Case histories of the careers of some Maka intellectuals have been omitted, as also an extensive appendix on witchcraft, although appendices on the traditional background of the Maka, on economy, demography, and administrative organisation, have fortunately been maintained.

The last power base in Cameroon society remains a fascinating topic of discussion. Bayart's view (accepted by Geschiere) that power ultimately legitimises itself, that all power derived from the Head of State, Ahmadou Ahidjo, cannot really satisfy the social and political researcher. Recent developments in Cameroon, which involved a change of Government, have made Geschiere's questions highly topical again. It is not unlikely that a period is approaching in which the political rôle of the masses will become more tangible.

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