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l'historien montre comment elles se confondent parfois en la personne de certains individus (les intellectuels devenus planteurs, tels G. Dadié, J. Anoma, M. Laubhouet ; les planteurs-hommes d'affaires-intellectuels), il décrit des alliances entre elles : par exemple, à un niveau local, lorsqu'il s'agit de rédiger et signer des dénonciations, des pétitions contre les abus d'administrateurs ; ou bien quand une famille, les Fadiga, répartit ses membres dans tous les registres de l'influence (commerçants, marabout, chef de quartier, élève à l'EPS de Bingerville, commis dans les services du gouvernement) et dans plusieurs villes (Touba, Bouaké, Abidjan...).

Je n'ai pas loin de là recensé tous les intérêts de cette recherche, j'ai rendu compte de quelques aspects d'histoire sociale concernant la bourgeoisie alors que cet ouvrage comporte d'autres parties essentielles : l'étude et la cartographie de l'installation des postes de 1843 à 1924, une synthèse nouvelle de l'histoire économique ivoirienne entre 1893 et 1940, des enquêtes sur les « classes populaires » et le milieu des « marginaux ». Sur tous ces plans le livre de Pierre Kipré, bien dans la tradition rigoureuse du groupe des historiens africains, devient indispensable.

Marc Le Pape


Luke's study of the Sierra Leone Port Authority, a 'parastatal' structure established in 1965, and its ethnically diverse labour force, adds to our understanding of African workers such as their responses to what is described as a 'neo-patrimonial' regime. We are given a wide-ranging study which covers many issues, some with greater analytical depth than others.

When the Port Authority was established, government considered it somewhat of a centre-piece of development strategy. Today, it is deeply mired in political patronage and drawn, as Luke demonstrates, into 'a pervasive system of political clientelism'. Like similar bodies elsewhere in the Third World, those associated with such structures 'struggle for access to the resources of the State'. There is little new here, but Luke does take us step by step through the early history of the port and concludes this review with an exposé of post-independence patronage and corruption practiced with equal determination by the elite and union leaders — or anyone else who puts his mind to it. Before independence, the port was managed very bureaucratically, perhaps even according to financial accountability, but soon after 1961 a political rather than an economic rationale took hold. Corruption, Luke concludes, is not due to the 'personal characteristics of individuals' but the expression of 'a political culture in which a low premium is placed on the accountability of public servants'.

The merit of Luke's study is that he asks a lot of very relevant questions and seeks answers from a wide arena. How do low-paid workers live under such a setting? What are the objectives of the unions and the quality of the leadership? And what do we learn about the attitudes and actions of workers, skilled or not, and those with steady or casual employment? Are the dockworkers radical in ideology and action, or merely reformist or economic in objectives? Is there a 'labour aristocracy' among them, although the majority are at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder? How do workers and the union respond to the political turmoil, the rise and decline of political machines, conflicting and ever changing policies, and repression of strikes? What is clear is that all these issues,
from the significant to the minor, are intensely political but, what Luke makes less clear, the dynamic of the struggles are basically economic and embedded in the massive inequalities and, hence, the struggle for power and privilege. Sierra Leone is no exception. The State is weak; its legitimacy is questionable; its grassroot support variable, but those in (temporary) command make hay while the sun shines.

Luke traces the history of labour protest and shows the workers were far from compliant. As early as November 1892 workers went on strike protesting a reduction in wages. Railway workers struck in 1898 and again in 1911. Economic conditions deteriorated significantly when prices rose by over 300% between 1914 and 1919. Feelings ran high and, in July 1919 (and again in 1920), serious disturbances occurred and repression followed. Union leaders and towering figures like Wallace-Johnson appeared on the political stage and acted their part, but soon faded away leaving little more than a memory. Wallace-Johnson, a supporter of the 'toiling masses', was certainly a thorn in colonial Sierra Leone, whose more elite citizens were not infrequently more British than the British. On the whole the union leaders then as now are conservative and opposed to the use of the strike as a political weapon. Since independence unions, including the dockworkers, have refrained from pressing explicit political objectives. But, nevertheless, the overall impression Luke gives is of a steadily rising proletarian consciousness particularly, as elsewhere, among the more skilled and established dockworkers, while the lower-paid and casual workers tend to make use of clientelism. As a labour force, the concerns of the dockers are wages, prices, living conditions, education, medical care, the effects of mechanization of cargo handling, replacing overtime with a shift system, and the constant attempt by management to make extensive use of casual workers and thus segment the labour force. Luke tells us nothing about promotions and mobility for workers. We learn a good deal of the Works Committee, launched in 1952, a Joint Industrial Council, and Wages Boards created in an effort to structure industrial relations and improve communications. However, a 'free' labour market and 'illiberal policy' on benefits and remuneration kept wages low—a denial of the view that public sector workers live off fat created by others, such as the peasantry.

Central to Luke's study are his observations on class consciousness of the dockers—based largely on a questionnaire survey. Here he appears to share the views of Gavin Kitching as set out in his important study of Kenya. The issue, Luke suggests, is not 'who exploits whom' but rather 'who is making how much money out of this [particular] system of relations'. The danger of this perspective is that of semantic obfuscation. There is a distinct and, particularly in Sierra Leone, highly visible class structure. Corruption is not an equalizer. There are some who are highly successful at this nefarious game, while others are mere sidekicks and recipients of the trickle-down effect. Luke admits as much when he writes that 'the availability of such [corrupt] monies to well-placed individuals among the elite arguably accounts for the major portions of their incomes, this is certainly not the case for lower-paid parastatal employees'. He rightly rejects the 'labour aristocracy' thesis. Official income figures provide the contrary evidence. He suggests that not even the lower-paid workers are parasitic on the rural peasantry.

Skilled workers are more likely to express radical sentiments perhaps because they have a little more latitude to take chances and react with greater determi-

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nation to 'their relative deprivation'. Overall, the class attitudes of the dockers are described as ambivalent about the inequalities they observe; to say 'that they were poor was being ungrateful to God or Allah', and 'that they were unequal because it was the will of God'. Yet a significant number also felt that political power, influence and corruption [. . .] contribute to inequalities in society' and over half believe that they are not getting their fair share. Individual entrepreneurship was not given as a primary objective, but clientelism is sought and valued. Evidently, the dockers are realists who understand the 'world in which they live and, accordingly, are prepared to make compromises with it'. Luke follows this observation with the often quoted passage from The Eighteenth Brumaire that 'Men make their own history, but . . .' This quote is quite out of place as Marx formulated this view to mean something different than being 'prepared to make compromises'. What is more to the point is Luke's observation that the dockers resent some of the activities of [the] political and bureaucratic kleptocracy'.

The last two chapters are devoted to a lengthy account of the Dock Workers Union, its policies, strategies, achievements and failures, internal struggles among the leadership, relations with political parties, and intervention by influential politicians. Largely because the unions have rejected political radicalism, their effectiveness on behalf of their members has been limited. The managerial power structure subjects the dockers to 'intense supervision' and, it appears, to rigid subordination. Dockers understand that they need a union, but 'traditionally held beliefs mediate the responses of [. . .] workers to their situation of relative poverty'. The unions have made some progress despite their somewhat constrained assertion and often uncritical perspective. They are restricted by established 'clientelist relations with politicians whose influence could be used to effect [only] marginal improvements in wages and working conditions'. Luke does not provide us with any evidence that union leaders, or more active members, really understand 'What is to be Done' and 'Who the enemy really is'.

The conditions of workers, and the class position they occupy, must be set in a broader historical context. The existence and structure of a parastatal corporation is merely one aspect of the political economy of Sierra Leone. Nor is the distinction between the new 'neo-patrimonialism' and 'accountability' under colonialism a very sharp conceptual tool to understand the class position of African workers. Like their compatriots elsewhere, African workers are direct producers of surplus and services which place them, objectively, in a distinct class position whoever their employer, State or private. There are (or were) powerful people in Sierra Leone such as the Lebanese merchants; there is also a powerful, if rather low-in-the-tooth, Sierra Leone middle class who have set the social pace for many years. There are also a large number of poor, both urban and rural. How did this come about? There are also ethnic and chieftaincy struggles. But there is also a working class and unions attempt to speak for this class. Luke's somewhat formalistic approach often obscures these facts. Yet this is an interesting case study which throws further light on African workers and the struggles still before them.

Peter C. W. Gutkind
