

WEINRICH, A. K. H. 1971 *Chiefs and Councils in Rhodesia: Transition from Patriarchal to Bureaucratic Power*. London, Heinemann, xix, 252 pp. £4.50.

Bearing a title similar to that of J. F. Holleman's pioneer survey of the 1961 Mangwende local government crisis,<sup>1</sup> Sr. Mary Aquina's work examines the interaction between chiefs, councils, government and people in nine pseudonymous Karanga communities. Her extensive fieldwork, conducted between 1962 and 1968, coincided with the seminal post-Mangwende period when the development of local responsibility in Rhodesian African areas was accelerated by the linked means of councils and community development, a process expected to reach its peak by the mid-1970s.<sup>2</sup>

This book is divided into three main sections, preceded by a brief and occasionally inaccurate historical introduction. Although the reserves had been gazetted for the sole occupation of Africans three years beforehand, it is untrue to say that the 1923 Constitution 'had already made provision for racially segregated areas' (p. 12); for, however little exercised, the right of Africans to purchase land in what was regarded as the 'white' area was not extinguished until the Land Apportionment Act was promulgated in 1931.<sup>3</sup> Also, there is no direct documentary evidence in the Native Affairs files that are open to support the author's contention that, subsequent to the 1937 Native Councils Act, Native Commissioners 'imposed' councils on tribal communities (p. 18). The majority of Native Boards consulted in 1938 either refused to apply for higher status or elected to leave the matter over for further consideration; like many of his colleagues, the N.C. Marandellas took pains to assure his Board that it was not the Government's wish to force councils on the people.<sup>4</sup>

The first section of Sr. Mary's book expands on the theme of chiefs' relations with government, and through the medium of several interesting case-studies, illustrates the variety of responses—some viable, others leading to the eventual disintegration of the chief's position—made by traditional leaders to government officials. The author ably handles her material and convincingly fits it into her theoretical model (p. 77). Above all, she demonstrates the complexity of this key relationship in local politics and indicates that the choice of behaviour pattern transcends the familiar options of overt opposition, as in the classic case

of Munhuwepayi Mangwende,<sup>5</sup> and complete co-operation with the government.

This is followed by a detailed study of a succession dispute in one community that lasted over two decades and at various stages involved government at all levels, neighbouring chiefs, some adjacent white farmers and the local M.P. The author is to be commended for her clear presentation and succinct analyses of the various steps in the dispute. Unlike many social anthropologists, she does not bury the reader under a welter of technicalities and she takes the trouble to identify each of the participants whenever mentioned in the text by genealogical title as well as by his fictitious name. One minor criticism: since the reader must constantly refer to the skeleton genealogy (on p. 111) while following the history of this dispute, it is unfortunate that the table was not printed on a 'pull-out' page at the end of the book to obviate frequent turning-back.

Sr. Mary's concluding topic, a study of the implementation of community development in her selected communities, draws together the book's principal themes and attempts a final synthesis. On one level, it is a severe indictment of the methods government and some chiefs have employed to introduce community development ideas; the author adduces considerable evidence derived from African informants of indirect pressure upon communities to accept this concept. Her treatment of this controversial subject raises a variety of questions, not the least of which is whether the government's use of chiefs, its recent decision to pay only 95 per cent of African primary teachers' salaries and offers of various financial inducements to Purchase Area farmers to form councils, while terminating funding from the African Development Fund 'S Vote' (p. 183), may be reconciled with community development as a purely voluntary concept designed to meet the community's 'felt needs'.

On another level, this concluding survey raises a further question, one that has been the subject of some controversy for the past two decades in Africa as a whole: the desirability of maintaining and even fostering the chief as an active participant in local politics. An earlier generation of commentators, dealing with West African local government, outlined the arguments for and against their inclusion.

It was maintained on the one hand that traditional leaders had a steadying effect<sup>6</sup> and moreover assisted in making councils acceptable to those whose values were still rooted in the past. On the other, it was pointed out that they might lose prestige if out-voted by younger elected members.<sup>7</sup> Sr. Mary's account, like Holleman's, shows that Rhodesia has aligned itself with the first school of thought. Her work amply illustrates the growing tendency of the 1960s to involve traditional leaders more closely with local development programmes, paralleling their increasing participation in national affairs.

At the local level, district administration has given rise to a plethora of representative institutions in tribal trust lands, of which the most significant are councils, community boards and the chief's traditional councils (*dare*). The author's attention is focussed on the first of these, and its relations with the third; apart from citing R. G. S. Simmonds's article on the work of community boards in Mangwende,<sup>8</sup> she says very little about the second. Her book gives the impression that traditional elements have, with official backing, gained control of several councils. Passmore's *Community Development Survey* (1968) however indicates that Victoria Province is atypical of Rhodesia as a whole in that an unusually high proportion

of community boards there are of the *dare* type, i.e., more than 50 per cent of their membership also belongs to the traditional council.<sup>9</sup> While a direct comparison with Sr. Mary's book is not possible since they are writing about different institutions, it may be advanced that the composition of councils in Victoria is also atypical. The 'Shoko' case-study (pp. 191-200) describes what seems to be an extreme state of affairs, the overt subordination of council to the local *dare*.

The recent amendment to the African Councils Act (No. 57 of 1971, sect. 17(2)), giving the vice-president (the chief) authority 'to direct a council to defer its deliberations on any matter for consultation between the council himself and other such bodies or persons as he may indicate'<sup>10</sup> would suggest that in many areas councils had freed themselves from the traditionalists, though at the expense of widening the gap between progressives and conservatives to the point where government felt obliged to intervene and amend the Act. Such an interpretation would certainly go far to validate Sr. Mary's central thesis that Government's support of chiefs merely 'hardens the radical opposition between those who look back to the past and those who look forward to the future' (p. 236).

#### REFERENCES

*All the documentary sources cited are in the National Archives, Salisbury.*

1. HOLLEMAN, J. F. 1968 *Chief, Council and Commissioner*. London, O.U.P. This book is discussed in STEELE, M. C. 1970 Some Problems of Government in Rhodesia. *Rhodesian History*, 1, 83-6.
2. RHODESIA 1972 *Report of the Secretary for Internal Affairs for the year 1971*. Salisbury, Government Printer, Cmd.R.R. 32, p. 28.
3. Earlier constitutional safeguards for the right of Africans to purchase land on an equal footing with Europeans outside the reserves were repeated in the Southern Rhodesia Constitution Letters Patent, section 43, *The Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia* . . . 1923, [Salisbury] Government Printer, 1924, p. 25.
4. See generally NATIVE AFFAIRS, Native Boards, 1931-1939, S 1542/N2; in particular, see *IBID.*, N.C. Marandellas to C.N.C., 2. vi. 1938.
5. HOLLEMAN, *Chief, Council and Commissioner*, chapters 3-6.
6. FOWLER, W. 1953 Some Observations on the Western Region Local Government Law. *Journal of African Administration*, 5, 119-23.
7. WRAITH, R. E. 1964 *Local Government in West Africa*. New York, Praeger, pp. 38-9. The African Councils Amendment Act (No. 57 of 1971; section 17(1)) resolved this problem in Rhodesia by depriving the chiefs of their right to vote at Council meetings.
8. SIMMONDS, R. G. S. 1969 Self-help in the Mangwende Chieftainship. *NADA*, 10, 9-13.
9. PASSMORE, G. C. 1968 *The Community Development Survey, 1968*. Salisbury, University College of Rhodesia, Department of Political Science (mimeo), paras. 126-46, especially 129, Table XI.
10. See also the Minister's comments on this amendment, RHODESIA 1971 *Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly*, 80, c.644, 7 September.

*University of Rhodesia*

M. C. STEELE