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# THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER IN BRITISH COLONIAL AFRICA

DAVID KILLINGRAY

EFFECTIVE COLONIAL government rested on two basic pillars: firstly, the maintenance of law and order to uphold the authority of the administration; and secondly, the collection of adequate revenue with which to finance the running of the colony. Whichever way colonies were gained, whether in 'a fit of absence of mind' or by calculated conquest, and by whatever principles and methods they were governed (directly or indirectly), these two essential features predominated.<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written about colonial taxation and also the function of law in Africa but relatively little about the maintenance of law and order. In Lugard, Buell, and Hailey, the 'standard' texts of the colonial period, taxation in its various forms is listed in the indexes; the police, law and order, are only briefly mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Similarly the recent historiography of British colonial Africa often assumes, or ignores, the ways in which the authority of the colonial government, and the chiefly hierarchies it created and patronized, was upheld and sustained. Many of the studies of colonial Africa have tended to be about administrative structures and judicial processes.<sup>3</sup> Most works on aspects of indirect rule largely ignore the ways and means by which the 'traditional' elite exercised authority.<sup>4</sup> Notable exceptions are John Tosh's study of colonial chiefs in Lango and the recent book by Martin Chanock on law, custom and social order in Malawi and Zambia.<sup>5</sup> Historians of Africa have also neglected the police

The author teaches history at Goldsmiths' College, University of London. Different versions of this paper have been discussed at seminars in London, Liverpool and East Lansing, and the author is grateful to friends and colleagues for their comments.

1. Charles Dundas, Chief Sec. of the N. Rhodesian Government, said in 1935 that in industrial areas the District Officer came into contact with the African population 'almost only in the guise of public authority and power—that is as the avenging magistrate and the tax collector'. Quoted E. Berger, *Labour, race and colonial rule* (Oxford, 1974) p. 74. W. R. Crocker in *Nigeria. A critique of British colonial administration* (London 1936) p. 151, quotes the comment of a fellow officer: 'What poor critturs these Hausas and Fulanis must think we are. The only thing they see of us is *aski, kurdi, sharia*—work, money and the policeman-cum-magistrate.'

2. F. D. Lugard, *The dual mandate in British tropical Africa* (London, 1922); R. L. Buell, *The native problem in Africa*, 2 vols. (New York 1928); Lord Hailey, *An African survey*, (Oxford 1938. 2nd. ed. 1945, rev. ed. 1956).

3. E.g. I. F. Nicolson, *The administration of Nigeria 1900 to 1960: Men, methods and myths* (Oxford 1969).

4. E.g. A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs. Indirect rule in southeastern Nigeria, 1891–1929* (London 1972); M. Crowder and O. Ikeme, eds., *West Africa chiefs. Their changing status under colonial rule and independence* (New York 1970).

5. John Tosh, *Clan leaders and colonial chiefs in Lango. The political history of an East African stateless society c. 1800–1939* (Oxford 1978), particularly chs. 6–8. Martin Chanock, *Law, custom and social order. The colonial experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge 1985).

and the armed forces. All of this might be explained by arguing that the collection of taxation (and in certain colonies the recruitment of labour) was central to colonialism and that for most of the colonial period the colonies were relatively quiescent, able to be run by a mixture of bluff and consent.<sup>6</sup> However, the number of studies emphasizing the violent nature of colonial rule and African resistance to it might indicate a contrary point of view. This needs to be balanced by two observations. First, the perhaps unfashionable assertion, that a large measure of peace accompanied British colonial rule. The *pax Britannica*, for a large part of Africa, was not an empty phrase or a pious wish. British rule *did* provide a high degree of peace and individual security in marked contrast to the often violent conditions that prevailed before. Second, that certain areas of Africa and aspects of society were in many ways violent and continued to be so after the imposition of alien rule.

Fashions in historiography have tended to direct the attention of scholars to the large administrative devices of colonial rule and to detailed studies of notable reactions and responses by Africans to foreign control and influence. The legal framework and the function of law in colonial Africa—the imposition and adaptation of alien law, the codification, ‘creation’ and restructuring of ‘customary’ processes—continues to attract study by anthropologists and historians.<sup>7</sup> And more recently the study of crime and criminal activity in Africa (following a vogue in European historical study) has begun to attract increasing scholarly attention.<sup>8</sup> Parallel to this in Europe has gone the study of police forces and measures of social control. This has been largely neglected in the study of colonial Africa.

### *Concepts of Law and Order*

A useful starting point might be to briefly examine what was involved in colonial rule and what was generally understood by ‘law and order’ in colonial territories. Inherent in colonial rule was a new source of ultimate

6. On the question of ‘bluff’ see the comments by Margery Perham, *West African passage: A journey through Nigeria, Chad and the Cameroons*, ed. A. H. M. Kirk-Greene (London 1983) p. 66. It might be added that frequently taxation and policing were very closely related. The *Annual Colonial Report for Nigeria, 1927*, p. 13, explained the expansion of the police force: ‘In view of the approaching institution of taxation in the Southern Provinces, an increase in 500 rank and file was granted during the year, as a temporary measure, and these have been distributed throughout the provinces, so that a mobile body of men should be in readiness should any emergency arise.’

7. E.g. Chanock, *Law, custom and social order*, and ‘Making customary law: Men, women and courts in colonial Northern Rhodesia’, in M. J. Hay and M. Wright eds., *African women and the law: Historical perspectives* (Boston, Mass., 1982); C. Louise Sweet, ‘Inventing crime: British colonial law policy in Tanganyika’, in Colin Sumner ed., *Crime, justice and underdevelopment* (London 1982); also the papers on African Law in History given to the African History Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London, 1984–5.

8. E.g. the papers given to the seminar on Comparative Commonwealth History: Crime, Deviance and Control, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1984–85. See also Charles van Onselen, ‘Crime and total institutions in the making of modern South Africa’, *History Workshop* 20 (Autumn 1985); and Donald Crummey, ed., *Banditry and rebellion in Africa* (London 1986).

authority, new judicial institutions and personnel. James Read writes that 'these included not merely judges and magistrates, administrative officers and police officers from Britain, but clerks, messengers, and policemen who might be local people, 'native strangers' from other areas, or Asians. The colonial regime provided new instruments of coercive authority mainly reflecting alien ideas'.<sup>9</sup> In all colonies a dual system of laws was established, an alien law based on the system then pertaining in England, and 'customary' law. Judicial authority lay largely in European hands; the new system of courts became an essential part of the means of establishing and maintaining law and order. In the early days of colonial rule of dispensation of the law, often by men devoid of professional training or real local knowledge, was inevitably a rough and ready affair. The vital consideration for colonial rulers was to establish a claim to authority and to uphold the colonial 'peace'. 'Customary' law was intended to sustain 'traditional' hierarchies endorsed by the colonial authorities. Thus the law imposed over much of British colonial Africa was largely designed to underpin the colonial presence. Alien law rarely meant the rule of law. Indirect rule was not concerned with the rule of law but with supporting the colonial structure.<sup>10</sup> Colonial rule created new 'crimes', many of which were offences against the imposed structure of colonial management. Certainly colonial government did seek to curb and punish wrongful acts by one person against another but an essential feature of colonial law and policing was enforcing colonial rules and punishing those who breached them.

It is clear that law and order meant different things to different people at different times. Colonial officials administering a territory from the capital had a markedly different view of what constituted, and what was involved, in maintaining law and order than did African rulers whose authority rested upon a system of indirect rule. For most of the colonial period British rule meant thinly spread administration. Manpower and resources allowed for little more than selective administration; colonial government provided a loose structure of territorial management. Within this loose framework effective authority, as far as most of Africa was concerned, remained largely in the hands of African 'traditional' rulers.<sup>11</sup>

For colonial governments the maintenance of law and order meant taking firm action to deal with any threat to the continuing system of rule imposed by the British. The authority, and dignity, of Residents and District Commissioners, 'traditional' rulers and their agents, had to be upheld and taxes paid regularly. The enforcement of colonial rules varied enormously throughout the continent by place and time. It also depended

9. H. F. Morris and James Read, *Indirect rule and the search for justice* (Oxford 1972) p. 183.

10. Chanock, *Law, custom and social order* chs. 4 and 6.

11. See Robert Heussler's description of how Hadeija, in Northern Nigeria, 'relapsed again to virtual independence' in the early years of colonial rule: *The British in Northern Nigeria* (London 1968) pp. 32-33.

upon the attitudes of individual colonial officers and their interpretation of events. District officials, often remote from the territorial capital, exercised their own discretion about local affairs. Invariably most officials, with an eye to promotion, were concerned that their activities as administrators should attract only favourable attention. Thus their actions were more likely to be directed towards avoiding, or smoothing over, local conflicts and keeping a 'clean book' with the Secretariat. If District Officers over-reacted to local crises they were likely to draw down on themselves not only gubernatorial wrath but also unfavourable notice from London.<sup>12</sup> The professional colonial service created after the First World War was manned by men who had imbued, and attempted to carry out, the idea of the 'good ruler'; often they were men who could also exercise a relatively high degree of self-restraint. Most believed that British colonial rule contained basic elements of justice and a sense of 'fair play'. Armed force stood behind the rulers but its use was rarely contemplated; the presence of a European official with a walking stick and a few policemen was sufficient, so many believed, to ensure that the law was obeyed. When the bluff was called and violence had to be used some colonial officials saw this as an admission of failure.<sup>13</sup>

The forces employed to maintain law and order consisted of the government police in the front line with the military in reserve; both forces were numerically small. Africa was only thinly policed by the colonial government. Colonial government had an interest in protecting European lives and property in towns and commercial centres and providing a measure of control over the key parts of the economic infrastructure. Thus many territories had different branches of the police: town police employed by municipalities and often largely concerned with regulating African movements within the town, and other police units charged with specific duties involving the escort of officials and specie, or supervising the railways, mines and waterways. The picture of policing in British colonial Africa is in many ways similar to that of England before the Peel reforms of 1829, where, writes Paul Rock, 'certain areas were unpatrolled and unpatrollable, and they enjoyed an autonomy of state control'.<sup>14</sup> Colonial Africa, like eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England had only rudimentary policing. Towns were policed by the government, particularly those areas

12. See Roger G. Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo "Riots" and their background: Aspects of colonial administration and African response in eastern upper Ghana', *Jl. Afr. Hist.* 24, 1 (1983).

13. E.g. John Brock, a DC., commenting on the shooting at Nkhata Bay during the Nyasaland Emergency in March 1959, said that he was very reluctant to let the troops fire. When they did he realized that his career had ended: 'it was the end of all I stood for and my career in the Colonial Service'. 'The End of Empire', Independent Television, 8 July 1985.

14. Paul Rock, 'Law, order and power in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England', in Stanley Cohen and Andrew Scull eds., *Social control and the state. Historical and comparative essays* (Oxford 1983).

where Europeans and the African educated elite lived. After all these were the people who paid local taxes and acted on town councils. Like European towns in the early nineteenth-century certain quarters were virtually untouched by the police who rarely entered such areas unless there was serious unrest, and then only in force.

Outside the towns and away from the main lines of communication, policing was very much a hit and miss affair where 'much [was] left to hazard'.<sup>15</sup> Settler colonies, such as Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, tended to be more heavily policed than most other colonies and with a substantial European police presence. In giving evidence to the commission of enquiry into the Copperbelt Disturbances of 1935 one European witness argued that: 'The natives in Southern Rhodesia have far more respect for Government officials than they have in this country [Northern Rhodesia] . . . In Southern Rhodesia you might say that every inch of the territory is policed, you have regular patrols. The European police are always in touch with the natives and go among them and I think that has a certain beneficial effect. They see that they cannot get away with a crime, they are found out and brought to justice. The natives anywhere never see a policeman.'<sup>16</sup> The year before an official 'Review of the Tribal Situation' in Northern Rhodesia had emphasized the weak coercive apparatus of colonial government over large areas of the country. The Review stated that 'the Civil Police Force have been reduced below the safety level, and there is not a single khaki-clad man on the north-east plateau . . . which for twenty-five years have been accustomed to a military detachment at Kasama'.<sup>17</sup> Two years later Sir Herbert Dowbiggin reported that 'in this big [Northern] Province, in which there are nine districts, there are no police'.<sup>18</sup> Predictably those concerned with security forces tended to argue that existing forces were too weak and thinly spread, but what pertained in Northern Rhodesia in the 1930s was typical of most of British Africa in the inter-war years.

Colonial governments had an interest in maintaining a framework of law and order within which the basic tasks of colonial administration could be carried out. If an area could not be properly policed, or where an energetic administrative presence might lead to unrest, then it could be left virtually to its own devices. 'There is only one way to treat these Northern Territories, the home of nomadic camel, cattle and sheep owning peoples', wrote Sir

15. William Wickham's description of eighteenth-century English policing quoted by Clive Emsley, *Policing and its context 1750-1870* (London 1983) p. 48.

16. Evidence of Arthur Houston Goslett, 8 Aug. 1935 *Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt Disturbance Commission: Russel Report 1935, Despatch and Evidence*, quoted by T. O. Ranger, *The African voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930* (London 1970) p. 225.

17. Public Record Office, Kew (PRO) AIR 9/66, 'Review of the Tribal Situation', prepared by the Secretariat, N. Rhodesia, 6 Feb. 1934, secret, Appendix A to Norman-Newall Report, 1934.

18. *Report on the Northern Rhodesia Police by Sir Herbert Dowbiggin* (Lusaka 1937) p. 79.

Geoffrey Archer of the Karamojong in the mid-1920s, 'and that is to give them what protection we can under the British flag and, otherwise, *to leave them to their own customs, as far as possible, and under their own chiefs*'.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that in many colonies there was a good deal of institutional and communal violence that the colonial administration did not see as its direct concern.<sup>20</sup> Crime in African townships, or factional violence in the countryside (e.g. *asafo* conflict in the southern Gold Coast towns which was sometimes extremely bloody) might go unchecked, or be thought not to be of great significance by colonial officials either because the administration lacked knowledge about it and the means to prevent it, or because it was not regarded as a serious threat to the colonial order. The prevailing ideology argued that where possible it was the responsibility of the African community to police itself. The institutions of indirect rule, and the extension of this system throughout much of British Africa in the 1920s and 1930s, emphasized the role of chiefly authority in preserving law and order. Government police and soldiers existed, often at a distance, for use in cases of real emergency when local unrest might precipitate a threat to the continued rule of African agents of the colonial state, and, more seriously, to the security of the colonial order itself. For the most part the daily maintenance of normal law and order was in the hands of African 'traditional' rulers and the agencies that they employed. It was only with the 'second colonial occupation' of Africa after 1945 that the colonial authorities attempted to extend government police into the rural areas, regions where up to then the enforcement of colonial rule 'had been very limited since their policing had been left to the native authority and tribal police'.<sup>21</sup>

The structure of indirect rule varied greatly ranging from the continuing rule of the emirs of Northern Nigeria, through Warrant Chiefs imposed on acephalous societies in south-western Nigeria, to small chiefdoms and sub-chiefdoms. Lord Hailey, writing about law and order in his work on Native Administration, stated that: 'Order is today largely secured by the system by which the native community polices itself, in the sense that only the major types of crime are dealt with by the Government Police Force, which has usually a very small establishment, the great majority of offences or breaches of law being dealt with through the agency of Native Authority Police or Tribal Messengers'.<sup>22</sup> Within such systems

19. James Barber, *Imperial frontier* (Nairobi 1968) pp. 208–209. [Italics in original].

20. Like many pre/semi-industrial towns anywhere in the world African towns contained 'the mob', those whom T. E. Bowdich, on his mission to Kumase in 1817, called 'the lower order of people . . . ungrateful, insolent and licentious'; *Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee* (London 1819; 1824 ed.) p. 250. Bowdich might have been writing about Regency London!

21. *Report of the Kenya Police Commission 1953* (Nairobi 1954) p. 4, which recommended the continuation of tribal police in the native reserves parallel to the government police which had been gradually introduced after 1944.

22. Lord Hailey, *Native administration in the British African territories. Part IV. A general survey of the system of Native Administration* (London 1951) p. 2. The role of the District Messengers varied from one territory to another. In Northern Rhodesia they were described

*Continued on next page*

native rulers could exercise considerable power. Some chiefs no doubt had a genuine concern for the welfare of the people that they ruled but many were concerned to strengthen their position of authority by accumulating further economic and political power. It was a position that was compromised because chiefly authority depended ultimately on the colonial government. Chiefs acted as colonial prefects for governments that often lacked sufficient powers and resources to regulate the day to day running of African polities and thus to control the harsh and arbitrary government inflicted on many ordinary Africans.<sup>23</sup> Chiefs not only tried to 'keep people in their place' but they also used their authority, as they had always done, to exploit those whom they ruled. The patronage extended to them by colonial government provided the authority and power to 'milk' those under their jurisdiction. Colonial officials were also placed under an obligation to uphold African rulers, whom they appointed, against their opponents. E. L. Scott, the District Commissioner in Lango in 1913, said that 'Opigi and his headmen must be supported at all costs at this present stage, or they will be unable to control their people. No decision by them should be reversed, if possible, even at the risk of occasional injustice. A little oppression even need not be a bad thing'.<sup>24</sup>

All too frequently 'traditional' rulers and their agents (messengers and native authority police) acted as predators. One Tiv recalled that 'policemen and messengers became the friends of the staff-chief. Together they ate up the land while the people cried out in distress . . .'.<sup>25</sup> John Tosh provides examples from Lango in the 1920s and 1930s of chiefs using their messengers to seize livestock and other property in what appeared to one European official to be a 'general civil war against the people'. Chiefs also used forced labour, both private and communal, to grow cotton enforcing their arbitrary rule with fines and beatings to such an extent that many peasants migrated from the area.<sup>26</sup> Under indirect rule African rulers

as 'intermediaries between the District Officer and the Chiefs and people', and as 'the eyes and ears of the District Officer'; *Report on the Northern Rhodesia Police by Sir Herbert Dowbiggin* (Lusaka 1937) pp. 3–5. See also W. V. Brelsford, 'The Boma Messenger and his uniform', *Northern Rhodesia Jl.* II, 3 (1954) pp. 34–42.

23. For an example of some of the dilemmas and constraints of such government see John Dunn and A. F. Robertson, *Dependence and opportunity: Political change in Ahafo* (Cambridge 1973) pp. 168–169. According to A. E. Afigbo, *Ropes of sand. Studies in Igbo history and culture* (Ibadan 1981) pp. 312–13, during the first thirty years of British rule in Igbo land the people were subjected to 'the sub-colonialism of an educated non-Igbo African elite . . . who through the control of the junior colonial service established petty tyrannies and ran a reign of terror and blackmail virtually without the knowledge of the European staff. . . . Some of them, especially the district interpreters, the chief and court clerks wielded so much power and arrogated to themselves so much authority that they survive in oral traditions as district commissioners.'

24. Tosh, *Clan leaders and colonial chiefs*, p. 188.

25. Rupert East, *Akiga's story. The Tiv tribe as seen by one of its members* (London 1939) pp. 289–92; see also Paul Bohannan, *Justice and judgement among the Tiv* (London 1957) p. 13.

26. Tosh, *Clan leaders and colonial chiefs*, pp. 207–12; C. Wrigley, *Crops and wealth in Uganda* (Kampala 1959), p. 49, states that in the Eastern Provinces in the 1930s a majority of cotton grown was worked by forced labour used by chiefs.



exercised a measure of control over local police, courts, and prisons, which gave to the unscrupulous and greedy enormous opportunities for authoritarian behaviour. Not that chiefs always had things their own way. Very often a chief led on behalf of a clan or economic faction against rival groups competing for jobs and resources. Generally one can say that colonial rule increasingly isolated chiefs and that chief-commoner conflicts, by no means unusual before the advent of colonial rule, became more pronounced partly due to colonial policies. Although the system of Native Administration also extended into the quarters of certain large towns (e.g. Ibadan, Free-town, Kampala, Kumase) substantial parts of even modern towns were not formally policed.<sup>27</sup> Law and order depended on communal activity. At one level the voluntary associations, often ethnic bodies which linked urban areas with the countryside, played a prominent role in providing welfare services while exercising social control over the community. Parkin's description of voluntary associations as an 'ideology of brotherhood', and Tamarkin's account of ethnic bodies in Nakuru moving from welfare provision to social control and then into chauvinist politics, suggests a role as upholders of some kind of law and order.<sup>28</sup> A closer look might reveal that this involved protection rackets, kangaroo courts, job allocation schemes, and also measures to protect ethnic 'purity' through the control of prostitution and preventing marriages outside the community.

Similar associations, ethnic and ethnic-political (e.g. the Ga Shifimo Kpee in Ghana—'to protect the interests of the Ga people') came into being in many parts of Africa. Some of these associations expressed populist hostility to the political role of chiefs. Within such bodies lay much political and economic power which was exercised especially in the years leading up to independence. Here were groups who mafia-like, organized, manipulated, exploited, intimidated, conned, and also 'policed' the community. David Throup, in his study of Kenya in the years after 1945, provides an example of government failure to police the sprawling slum locations of burgeoning Nairobi and how African political organizations assumed that role. He writes that in the years 1947–54 'the presence of the Administration and the police was extremely weak in the locations, which were abandoned to the control of the political militants and their allies among the Kikuyu dominated street gangs which terrorized the Luo and Abaluhya inhabitants of the city'. Later on Throup argues that 'Nairobi . . . had been abandoned to the control of the settler dominated

27. See Abner Cohen, *Custom and politics in urban Africa. A study of Hausa migrants in Yoruba towns* (London 1969); Peter C. W. Gutkind, *The Royal capital of Buganda. A study of internal conflict and external ambiguity* (The Hague 1963); N. Brian Winchester, 'Strangers and politics in urban Africa: A study of the Hausa in Kumasi, Ghana', unpub. PhD thesis, Indiana Univ., 1976.

28. David Parkin, *Neighbours and nationals in an African city ward* (London 1969) p. 155. M. Tamarkin, 'Tribal associations, tribal solidarity, and tribal chauvinism in a Kenya town'. *Jl. Afr. Hist.* 14, 2 (1973).

Municipal Councils which showed little interest in the appalling social problems of the African parts of the city. The Colonial Office, like the settler population, only became interested in the African locations when African discontent or crime threatened to spill over into the European business area or the suburbs. With only one policeman to every thousand inhabitants the authorities could do little to preserve control or combat crime in the locations . . .'.<sup>29</sup>

At another level vigilante groups enforced law and order of a very rough-and-ready type. Sometimes these were bodies organized to deal with specific instances of law-breaking (e.g. patrols to reduce thefts from workmen), but more often they were hastily assembled groups intent on dealing with some threat to communal security, or the spontaneous hue and cry in pursuit of a thief.<sup>30</sup>

### *Periodizing of Law and Order*

Any attempt at a periodization of law and order must be crude. Colonies, and regions within colonies, had markedly different histories; administrative systems, the presence of white settlers, the extent of economic development, the confidence and financial strength of central and local authorities all influenced the way in which the law was administered and enforced. Hugh Clifford, the new Governor of the Gold Coast, declared in 1913 that 'throughout the length and breadth of the Gold Coast Colony and its Dependencies there is no section of the population which . . . can be described as "under suspicion"'.<sup>31</sup> By contrast the Acting Governor-General of the Sudan in 1920 wrote off 'the present administration of the Southern Sudan [as] a failure', stating that after twenty years the area still required frequent semi-military operations and that expenditure greatly exceeded the revenue.<sup>32</sup> Unrest was endemic in the Southern Sudan and the British administration also feared the revival of militant Mahdism in the northern part of the country.<sup>33</sup> Equally they wanted to keep the Sudan free of the influence of Egyptian nationalism which had posed a serious threat to Britain's position on the lower Nile in 1919–20.<sup>34</sup> By

29. David Throup, 'The Governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell in Kenya, 1944–1952', unpub. PhD thesis, Cambridge Univ., 1983, pp. 263 and 268.

30. S. F. Nadel, *A black Byzantium. The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria* (Oxford 1942) p. 58. Winchester, 'Strangers and politics', p. 206; R. E. S. Turner, 'Law enforcement by communal action in Sukumaland, Tanganyika Territory', *Jl. Afr. Admin.*, 7, 4 (Oct 1955).

31. P.R.O. CO 96/534/32098. Clifford to Harcourt, conf., No. 627, 25 Aug. 1913.

32. Wasey Sterry to V. R. Woodland (Gov. Mongalla), 23 Sept. 1920, quoted by G. N. Sanderson, 'Aspects of resistance to British rule in the Southern Sudan, 1900–1928', in *Études Africaines offertes à Henri Brunschwig* (Paris 1982), p. 348. See also comment on the continued disturbances up to 1929 in the *Annual Report for Plateau Province*, Nigeria, 1931, quoted by Elizabeth Isichei, *A history of Nigeria* (London 1983) p. 396.

33. See Harold Macmichael, *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London 1934) ch. V; S. A. R. Bukhari, 'Military aspects of internal security in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1900–1928', unpub. M.Phil thesis, Univ. of London, 1972.

34. Peter Caddy, 'British policy and Egyptian unrest, 1914–1920', unpub. PhD thesis Univ. of London, 1982.

1910 British officials regarded large parts of Northern Nigeria as 'stable and secure', a phrase which masked the arbitrary and harsh rule of emirs who continued to exercise their own form of institutional violence under the umbrella of British control. In areas of southern and central Nigeria opposition to colonial rule required regular armed patrols and punitive expeditions well into the 1920s.<sup>35</sup> The Egba rising of 1918 was suppressed at the cost of several hundred lives, and the 'Women's War' culminated in the army firing on crowds of protesting women at Aba in 1929.

A very general periodization of law and order in British colonial Africa might read as follows:

*c. 1885–1914:* Small para-military constabularies (e.g. Sierra Leone Frontier Force, Niger Coast Constabulary) and locally recruited armies (e.g., Central African Rifles, West African Frontier Force) continued the process of conquest and 'pacification'. In the 'custom post' colonial state the constabulary guarded the frontiers and rivers, occupied newly conquered and troublesome areas, and patrolled the towns. Certain regions (e.g., Northern Uganda, Northern Territories of Gold Coast) remained under military or semi-military administration up to and beyond the First World War. By 1914 the military and civil functions of most constabularies had separated and distinct army and police forces had been formed. Most colonies had a high level of defence expenditure, e.g., Northern Nigeria in 1910 spent 27 per cent of its total expenditure on the military and police forces. In one or two areas of Northern Nigeria Native Authority police were established to serve alongside Government Police.

*c. 1914–20:* The withdrawal of troops and European personnel during the First World War resulted in unrest and revolt in certain areas. Several colonies had a greatly increased military presence during the war.

*c. 1920–1945:* As the system of indirect rule was established there was a tendency for European administration to retreat from the African countryside and pass the maintenance of law and order to Native Authorities. Much of British Africa was relatively passive as far as most colonial administrators were concerned. Military forces were reduced in the 1920s and again during the Depression years as a further economy measure. Outbreaks of serious unrest (e.g. Nigeria 1929, Sierra Leone 1931, Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1935) were contained and dealt with mainly by troops. The main burden of public order rested with the police. Government police forces in certain territories were reorganized and became increasingly more professional with enlarged criminal investigation departments, forensic laboratories, finger printing, and the start of radio communication

35. Richard W. Hull, 'The development of administration in Katsina Emirate, Northern Nigeria, 1887–1914', Unpub. PhD thesis, Columbia Univ., 1968, pp. 160–61. W. R. Shirley, *A history of the Nigerian Police* (Lagos 1950), pp. 52–66. David Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke* (London 1982), ch 2. W. R. Crocker, *Critique of British colonial administration*, pp. 71–72 for Idoma unrest in 1928.

systems. New Special Branches began to monitor the activities of political and religious groups. The Second World War increased official concern about the ability of administrations to adequately maintain law and order at a time when resources were severely stretched.

*c. 1945–60s:* Military and police forces gradually increased in strength and equipment from 1945–46 onwards. New para-military units, designed to combat unrest and opposition to government, strengthened the arm of the colonial state. In British West Africa 'schemes in aid of the civil power' became a major interest of the military from 1945. General Burrows, who took over West Africa Command in January 1945, presented a stark appraisal of the areas potential for unrest. He proposed the retention of armoured cars and tanks, the expansion and militarization of the police, and measures to prevent troops becoming disaffected by civil disobedience.<sup>36</sup> Most of the West African governors rejected the scheme. Burns, the Governor of the Gold Coast, argued in a despatch to London that 'if the time comes when armoured cars are necessary the time for calling in military aid is long overdue. . . . I think a decision to militarize the Police would signal inability to govern the Gold Coast except by force, a somewhat shameful (and untrue) confession which I should be unwilling to make'.<sup>37</sup> Following the disturbances in the Kikuyu reserves in Kenya in late 1947 the Kenya Government formed a Police Emergency Company in the following March. Equipped with bren and sten guns, grenades, rifles, and armoured vehicles the Company undertook preventive crime patrols in Nairobi and also toured the reserves. In 1949 it was supplanted by the Kenya Police Emergency Company.<sup>38</sup> During the post-war period many colonial governments were less able to cope with the rising tide of law and order questions, e.g., in the Gold Coast the government forces were stretched to a maximum as a result of swollen root disease control, the riots of February 1948, and the rise of more radical political and industrial activity. The authorities could not deal with other areas of law and order e.g. illegal diamond mining, and therefore they either looked the other way, attempted to devolve authority to private bodies, or conceded that the law had to change.

The police not only increased their professionalism but also extended their activities in the expanding urban areas and the countryside. Policing in the 1950s became much more an administrative concern than a communal

36. P.R.O. CO 554/140, Pt. 2, 33819/1, secret, 1945. CO. 554/140/33779, secret. Burrows meeting with Gater at War Office, 15 Oct. 1945. WO. 32/11771, 'Past, present and future of the RWAFF' by Burrows for West African Council meeting, 22 Jan. 1945.

37. P.R.O. CO. 554/140/33779, Burns to Creasy, secret, 13 Nov. 1945. Burns favoured disbanding the para-military Escort Police because it was unpopular with the general public; see David Killingray, 'The colonial army in the Gold Coast: Official policy and public response, 1890–1947', unpub. PhD thesis, Univ. of London, 1982, pp. 105–41.

38. *Report of Kenya Police Commission 1953* (Nairobi 1954).

one as the role of Native Authority Police was reduced and gradually re-established as local government police. Police, and military, had increased mobility with the use of vehicles and aircraft. A much greater use was made of police and military to deal with illegal strikes (e.g. Enugu miners 1949), curtail African political activity, suppress unrest/revolt (e.g. the very large-scale operations against Mau Mau 1952–56),<sup>39</sup> prevent secessionist attempts in Asante, Togo and Cameroon, and the widespread opposition to federation in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. By independence most governments had greatly enlarged police and military forces and also paramilitary forces such as the General Purpose Unit in Kenya. Successor governments took over the police Special Branch which was frequently used to gather intelligence about the activities of political opponents. Africanization had progressed fairly rapidly in the police forces and hardly at all in the military forces.

### *The Coercive Institutions*

For most of the colonial period British administration in colonial Africa 'rested on a minimum of force'.<sup>40</sup> Even in the years of conquest and 'pacification' colonial military and police forces were numerically small; their disciplined fire-power, machine guns and artillery usually ensured victory over numerically larger African opponents. That forthright imperialist and soldier, Richard Meinertzhagen, recorded in his Kenya diary in 1902: 'Here we are, three white men in the heart of Africa, with twenty nigger soldiers and fifty nigger police, sixty-eight miles from doctors or reinforcements, administering and policing a district inhabited by half a million well-armed savages who have only quite recently come into contact with the white man'.<sup>41</sup> In turbulent Goaso, on the borders of western Asante, the newly appointed district commissioner arrived in 1914 without soldiers or police to enforce his authority.<sup>42</sup> John Lonsdale illustrates what he calls 'the statelessness of the colonial state' by an example drawn from the Silver Jubilee festival in 1935 at Kakamaga, a district headquarters in western Kenya. 'The *power* of the state was on view with a parade of police', but says Lonsdale, 'how many besides the district commissioner knew that they were unable to fire their annual musketry practice for want of a suitable rifle range?'<sup>43</sup> Africans *may* have been fooled by the colonial bluff. That pre-supposes that people wished to

39. Anthony Clayton, *Counter-insurgency in Kenya. A study of military operations against Mau Mau 1952–1960* (Nairobi 1976; Manhattan, Kansas, 1984).

40. Lewis Gann reviewing Andrew Roberts, *History of Zambia* in the *Jl. Afr. Hist.* XVIII, 3 (1977) p. 459.

41. Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary 1902–1906* (Edinburgh 1957) p. 32

42. Dunn and Robertson, *Dependence and opportunity*, p. 129

43. John Lonsdale, 'State and peasantry in colonial Africa' in Raphael Samuel ed., *People's history and socialist theory* (London 1981) p. 113.

threaten the colonial order. Quite clearly they did not over large areas of Africa. In any case the colonial state was in itself often a symbol of power. Barber argues that in the recently 'pacified' Karamoja region of north-east Uganda in the 1930s, which had a very small police and military presence, 'clearly it was not our strength which achieved [law and order] but the memories of the recent past when the military strength of the government had filled the tribesmen with awe and fear. The troops on the Turkana passes were a ready reminder that this strength was still available'.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly similar examples of administrative impotence abound throughout British colonial Africa. Although civil and military officials invariably regarded the existing military and police forces as inadequate for the maintenance of law and order there is no doubt some truth in the official report from Northern Rhodesia in 1957 which stated: 'It will be many years before the police force is strong enough to be able to accept the responsibility for enforcing law and order throughout the Territory. There must therefore for some considerable time be a sharing of responsibility between the police and other organizations for the maintenance of law and order'.<sup>45</sup>

The first bodies of colonial police and soldiers were hastily raised and poorly trained, often recruited from ex-slaves and in some cases freebooters and brigands.<sup>46</sup> Policemen in Kenya in 1904 appeared as 'ragged, ill-armed and generally badly-equipped'.<sup>47</sup> A uniform often provided a licence to loot; black mercenaries and policemen, especially those on active duty, lived off the land and frequently exploited those whom they had been employed to protect.<sup>48</sup> Colonial soldiers and policemen, recruited from specific ethnic groups and stationed in alien areas, earned the hatred and deep contempt of those whom they helped rule. Asantes, for example, despised and distrusted the northern *odonko* (slave) who formed the rank and file of the Gold Coast Regiment with its intimidating military headquarters in the fort at Kumase. In Southern Rhodesia 'native police', recruited first of all from the Ngoni and then the Ndebele, earned the hatred of Shona-speaking peoples who referred to them as *Imbga dza vasungate*—'white men's dog's'.<sup>49</sup> Rarely did the colonial police or military receive

44. Barber, *Imperial frontier*, p. 213.

45. Northern Rhodesia. *Report of a Commission of Enquiry appointed to inquire into the causes of wastage of personnel from the Police Force* by P. A. P. Robertson (Lusaka Dec. 1957) p. 21 para 7.

46. David Killingray, 'Peasants, slaves and freebooters: Recruits to the colonial army in the Gold Coast, 1870-1920', paper given to the 25th annual conference of the American African Studies Association, Boston, Dec. 1983.

47. W. R. Foran, *The Kenya police 1887-1960* (London 1962).

48. E.g. Dunn and Robertson, *Dependence and opportunity*, p. 90. H. Brunswick, 'French expansion and local reaction in the time of imperialism (1880-1914)', in H. L. Wesseling, ed., *Expansion and reaction* (Leiden 1978) p. 136.

49. L. Vambe, *An ill-fated people* (London 1972) p. 125.

the fundamental assent of those they ruled,<sup>50</sup> or ever approach the ideal 'that the police are the public and that the public are the police'.<sup>51</sup> The employment of uniformed aliens, housed in barracks and police lines, emphasized the coercive nature of the forces of law and order and their foreign-ness from the ordinary people. Reporting on the Copperbelt unrest of 1963 the official enquiry said: 'it is regrettably true that the police are looked upon as a separate section of the community, very largely due to the fact that they live in Police 'Camps'. We recommend that . . . policemen should be housed in ordinary housing areas, alongside the people, where they would become part of the community'.<sup>52</sup>

### *The Police*

The task of colonial police forces was law enforcement and the maintenance of law and order.<sup>53</sup> Most colonies had more than one police force. Central government police functioned alongside local 'tribal' or Native Administration police. The former might have several branches: General police, increasingly composed of literate constables, and branches charged with specific functions—Escort, Railway, Mines, and Marine police.

50. See Alan Silver, 'The demand for order in civil society. A review of some themes in the history of urban crime, police and riot', in D. J. Bordan ed., *The police. Six sociological essays* (New York 1967).

51. T. Oluwale, *The nature of African customary law* (Oxford 1947) p. 266, note 2 quoting Sir Charles Reith, *The Police idea* (London 1938).

52. Northern Rhodesia. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Unrest on the Copperbelt, July–August 1963* (Lusaka 1963) para. 47.

53. There are few studies of African police forces. See T. N. Tamuno, *The police in modern Nigeria 1861–1965* (Ibadan 1970); Foran, *Kenya police*; John McCracken, 'Coercion and control in Nyasaland: A study of a colonial police force', *Jl. Afr. Hist.*, 27, 3 (1986); Anthony Clayton, 'The thin blue line: Studies in law enforcement in late colonial Africa', unpub. memorandum, 1983, in Rhodes House Library, Oxford, accompanying the Oxford Development Records Project collection of six police forces—Gold Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi, and Northern Rhodesia. W. H. Gillespie, *The Gold Coast police 1844–1938* (Accra 1938); P. Gibbs, *The history of the British South African Police*, 2 vols. (Salisbury 1972 and 1974); Wm. F. Gutteridge, 'Military and police forces in colonial Africa', in L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan eds., *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960*, vol. 2 (Cambridge 1970); H. H. R. Etheridge, 'The Sierra Leone Frontier Police: a study in the function and employment of a colonial force', unpub. M.Litt. thesis, Univ. of Aberdeen, 1967; N. J. Small, 'The Northern Rhodesian police and its legacy', *African Social Research*, 27 (Jan. 1979) pp. 523–39; S. K. Ankama, 'The police and the maintenance of law and order in Ghana', unpub. PhD thesis, Univ. of London 1967; Cyprian O. Okonkwo, *The police and people in Nigeria* (London & Lagos, 1966); C. M. Marlow, *A history of the Malawi Police Force* (Lilongwe 1971); W. R. Shirley. *History of the Nigerian police*. For a view from the Colonial Office see Sir Charles Jeffries, *The colonial police* (London, 1952). For an excellent comparative study of the police in Madras see David Arnold, 'The Armed Police: Colonial rule in South India, 1914–1947', *Modern Asian Studies*, 11, 1 (1979). I have also found useful the ideas in Emsley, *Policing and its context*. The best source of memoirs is in the ODRP collection mentioned above. Published accounts include W. R. Foran, *A cuckoo in Kenya. The reminiscences of a pioneer police officer in British East Africa* (London, 1936); Geoffrey J. Marton, *Just the job: some experiences of a colonial policeman* (London, 1957); Percy Sillitoe, *Cloak without dagger* (London, 1955); C. Harwich, *Red dust. Memoirs of the Uganda police 1939–55* (London, 1961). Police force journals are also a useful source, e.g. P. R. B. Speich, 'A history of the Northern Rhodesia Police', *Nkhwazi. Northern Rhodesia Police Mag.* 12, 1 (April 1964); and 'History of the Uganda Police Force', *Habari*, Dec. 1963 & March 1964. *The Police Journal and Quarterly Review for the Police Forces of the Empire* (1929–) also contains useful articles.

Most forces were numerically small.<sup>54</sup> Most government police forces had European senior officers; West African forces included some West Indian officers while those in East and Central Africa had a number of Asian inspectors and sub-inspectors. Senior African officers in the West African colonies were phased out in the late nineteenth-century and serious Africanization only began in the 1950s.<sup>55</sup> The Royal Irish Constabulary served as a model for many colonial forces. Colonial police officers received some of their training with the RIC at Phoenix Park up to 1914 and then with the Royal Ulster Constabulary at Newtownards after 1922. Ex-Palestinian police officers, with long acquaintance of dealing with armed challenges to law and order, joined African police forces in 1948–49.<sup>56</sup>

A typical African constable might be an illiterate ex-soldier from an ethnic group on the periphery of the colony or from outside its frontiers. For example, men from the Northern Territories and the neighboring French colonies provided a large number of the recruits for the Gold Coast Escort Police. The early police in Kenya were composed of Nubians, to be replaced later by Kamba, Kalenjin and Ganda; and at its creation in 1885 the Bechuanaland Native Protectorate force was largely Basuto.<sup>57</sup> In 1937 Igbo's constituted over 42 per cent of the Nigerian Government police.<sup>58</sup>

Early police forces had little training, composed of men who acted as the 'ears and eyes' of the white administration. They had considerable influence in their role as court messengers, interpreters, and as arbiters of who could and who could not see white district officers and magistrates.<sup>59</sup> For most of the colonial period police forces in colonial Africa did not exercise functions similar to those of European or modern police forces. Their role was a fairly narrow one, by action and role if not by definition. Combating crime frequently meant dealing with threats to colonial imposed law, upholding European authority and protecting white owned property. Only towards the end of the colonial period, and at different times in different colonies, did the police come to serve as guardians of

54. E.g. 1927: Uganda 1,197 rank and file; Tanganyika 1,128; Gold Coast 2,100.

55. E.g. in 1948 the Gold Coast Police had 120 gazetted European officers and only 2 Africans of district rank. By 1960 the proportions had been reversed. Generally European police officers had a lower level of education than that required of administrative officers. Sillitoe described his fellow recruits in the BSAP in 1908 as 'a fascinating assortment: ex-public school boys, remittance men and adventurers'. *Cloak without dagger*, p. 10. A more serious criticism of the training of European police officers is in Northern Rhodesia. *Commission of Inquiry in wastage of personnel*, p. 53, para. 5, and p. 55 para 8(g) and (i).

56. Rhodes House Library, Oxford. Mss. Afr. s. 1784. J. F. G. Coles, Box 1. Gold Coast.

57. Ethnic recruitment for the police and army was a common practice in colonial territories. e.g. Burmese police recruitment was among the Karen, Chin and Shan: J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial policy and practice* (Cambridge 1948) pp. 178–84.

58. Nigerian Govt. *Annual Report on the Nigerian Police Force for the Year 1937* (Lagos 1937) p. 2; 17.6 per cent. of the Force was literate, *ibid.* p. 3.

59. Brelsford, 'Boma Messenger'.



public interest and order rather than merely upholders of colonial authority. In addition to combating general crime policemen also performed a variety of other roles as agents of the colonial state.<sup>60</sup> They acted as tax gatherers, distraining goods and firing villages if necessary when people refused to pay, and rounding-up labour and conscripts in time of war.<sup>61</sup> Police patrolled borders, controlled immigration, confiscated fire-arms, supervised street cleaning and urban sanitation, and formed cordons to control the movement of cattle and people in order to prevent the spread of disease.<sup>62</sup> Another major role of the police from the 1930s onwards was their use by government, in cooperation with employers, to break-up illegal strikes.<sup>63</sup>

The machinery for the law enforcement functions of the police was limited and elementary before 1945 as were also funds and personnel. Following the Second World War police effectiveness increased with finger printing, forensic medicine and radio communications, all of which made criminal investigation departments more useful branches for urban police work. At the same time more sophisticated systems of intelligence gathering, organized through the Special Branch, monitored political activities and areas of potential unrest. The Special Branch, modelled on the British system established in the 1880s to meet Irish terrorism, functioned mainly as an intelligence gathering organization. Founded in the 1930s and 1940s in many colonies the branch increased in size and function after 1945 as nationalist activity grew.<sup>64</sup> For direct back-up in emergencies police reserves and mobile units were established; the mobile force in the Gold Coast was used on 200 occasions between December 1947 and September 1951.

Vast areas of colonial Africa were unpoliced by central government. Day-to-day law enforcement, such as it was, was the responsibility of the native authority and local 'tribal' police forces subject to 'traditional' rulers. In parts of Northern Nigeria the British merely adapted the existing *dogari* system that they found when they arrived. The doctrine of indirect rule extended native authority police in the colony, although not to Eastern Nigeria, and to other territories in Africa. In Kenya and Northern

60. On crime prevention roles see Tamuno, *Police in modern Nigeria*, ch. 8; also Peter Feuillherade, 'Police organization in Johannesburg, 1918-1932', unpub. paper African History Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London, Feb. 1981.

61. Crocker, *Nigeria. A critique*. pp. 69-72 and 93.

62. E.g. the Barotse-Nanwula Cattle Cordon operated by the Northern Rhodesia Police from 1920 to 1947. In Jan. 1908 the police, assisted by the army, cordoned off areas of Accra when bubonic plague broke out; *Gold Coast Gazette*, 25 Sept. 1908.

63. E.g. on the Copperbelt in the 1930s, Sierra Leone in 1939, the Enugu coal mine strike, Nigeria, 1949. The most serious industrial unrest in sub-Saharan Africa was the white miners rising on the Rand in 1922. See also H. M. Y. Kaniki, 'Wage labour and the political economy of colonial violence', *Afr. Soc. Research* 31 (June 1981).

64. Despite the thirty year rule many of the files on internal security in the colonies remain closed in the P.R.O. On the activities of the Special Branch in Kenya see Throup, 'The governorship of Sir Philip Mitchell'. Also Clayton, *Counter-insurgency in Kenya*, ch. 5.

Rhodesia government police rarely entered the reserves or Native Authority areas where the enforcement of law and order rested with 'tribal' police.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in the Sierra Leone Protectorate the Court Messenger Forces, established by Ordinance in 1907, had responsibility 'not only for the policing of the Protectorate, but for a greater extent for the peaceful administration of the country' until 1954 when the government police began to assume that role.<sup>66</sup> Generally unarmed, except for staves, and often composed of ex-slaves and former colonial soldiers, the native authority police became an essential part of the system of Native Administration in British Africa, upholding native courts, collecting taxes, and dealing with local crime. Writing of Northern Nigeria in the late 1940s Lord Hailey emphasized the 'value of the contribution made by the more important Native Authorities in the maintenance of law and order and the collection of tax. The policing of the region is in the main the responsibility of the Native Authorities. In many areas there are no government police, apart from a British Police Officer who supervises or trains the Native Authority Police, for which term is *Yan Doka*'.<sup>67</sup>

Native authority police forces varied considerably in size and structure. Some were small, many too small for efficient policing. The Doorma native authority police, formed in this small area of western Gold Coast in 1931, had an initial establishment of eight men; in the Northern Nigerian state of Ilorin there were 93 policemen in 1929, while the Dagomba force created in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast in 1932, and whose members swore allegiance to the local king, numbered a mere 50 policemen in 1947. By contrast the more populous state of Buganda had nearly 1,000 police in 1906, and the Oyo Provincial Native Authority Police in 1949–50 included 33 nco's and 225 constables. Separate small forces were even created to police the Hausa *zongo* in Kumase, and the *kibuga* or royal capital of Buganda.<sup>68</sup> Relatively little has been written about native authority policing. Ankama, Tamuno and Rodney provide some details about the organization, structure and role of such forces in the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Tanganyika.<sup>69</sup> Ankama draws attention to two problems about any study of the native authority police in the Gold Coast which may well be relevant to other territories: first, the documentary records appear to be

65. *Report of the Kenya Police Commission 1953* (Nairobi 1954) p. 4. *Report on Northern Rhodesia Police by Sir Herbert Dowbiggin* (Lusaka 1937) Pt. IV, pp. 82–84.

66. *The Introduction of the Police Force into the Protectorate*, Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1954, Sierra Leone (Freetown 1954) p. 4.

67. Hailey, *Native administration*, Part III, p. 69.

68. H. B. Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province* (London 1929) p. 210; Martin Staniland, *The Lion of Dagbon* (Cambridge 1975); Clayton, 'Thin blue line', p. 73; Hailey, *Native administration Part III*, p. 125; Winchester, 'Strangers and politics', p. 83; Gutkind, *Royal capital of Buganda*, pp. 90–91.

69. Ankama, 'Police and the maintenance of law and order', ch. 3. Walter Rodney, 'Policing the countryside in colonial Tanganyika', Proc. of Ann. Social Science conf. of the East African Univ., 1973; Tamuno, *Policing in modern Nigeria*, chs. 3 and 4.

meagre, and second, most of the forces established under the system of indirect rule during the 1920s and '30s had only a vague and ill-defined legal status.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly we need to know a great deal more about the structure, control and role of these forces deputed to police vast areas of British colonial Africa. Certainly they were subject to considerable chiefly influence. The Kumase Messenger Force, constituted as a native police body in 1924, was known as the 'Asantehene's police', and elsewhere in the southern Gold Coast similar forces were referred to as 'Omanhene's police'. A major role for these police was to maintain the authority and laws of traditional rulers. As such they often became the instruments of personal arbitrary rule and for the protection of the economic interests of chiefly rulers. Hailey observed that in the Gold Coast cocoa 'hold-up' of 1937 native authority police were 'used for objects other than the maintenance of law and order or the purposes laid down in the Native Authority Ordinances'.<sup>71</sup> By the late 1940s a growing chorus of criticism, from African nationalists and colonial officials, questioned the usefulness and efficiency of native authority police and the continuation of a system which placed great power in the hands of chiefs through the control of police, courts and prisons.<sup>72</sup> The Coussey Committee on Constitutional Reform in the Gold Coast, in October 1949, recommended an end to native authority police; so did the Select Committees on Local Government in the reports on Ashanti, the Colony, and the Northern Territories in 1951. In the same year Sir Sidney Phillipson, in his report on Regional Administration in the Gold Coast, argued for retention of native authority police but as district police forces. A government enquiry on the police by an independent expert, Colonel A. E. Young, the Commissioner of the City of London Police, urged that an end be made to police subject to chiefs, a recommendation accepted by the government in 1952.<sup>73</sup> By the Local Government Ordinance 1952 and the Local Authority Police Power Ordinance 1953 native authority forces became subject to local councils. In 1962 local authority controlled police forces were assimilated with the Ghana Police Service.

However, in other British colonies, notably Nigeria, a system of native

70. Ankama, 'Police and the maintenance of law and order', pp. 156-65.

71. Hailey, *Native administration Part III*, p. 210.

72. The Chief Commissioner, Ashanti, said of the local police forces that 'the pay does not attract able men: they are largely untrained; the employment authority being small, there is little prospect of advancement; and their livelihood is at the mercy of those who do not only constitute the employment body but are usually court members as well'; quoted by Ankama, 'Police and the maintenance of law and order', p. 200. See also Robertson and Dunn, *Dependence and opportunity*, p. 203.

73. *Statement of the Gold Coast Government on the Report upon the Gold Coast Police by Col. A. E. Young* (Accra 1952); *Commission for Regional Administrations. Report by the Commissioner, Sir Sidney Phillipson* (Accra 1951); Ankama, 'Police and the maintenance of law and order', pp. 165ff., and 200ff. Hailey in 1951 described the Native Authority Police system in the Gold Coast Colony as 'in an experimental stage'. *Native Administration Part III*, p. 210. See also 'Local authority police forces', *Jl. Afr. Admin.* 6, 2 (April 1954).

authority police continued throughout the 1950s to be inherited and used by the newly independent state following the transfer of power.<sup>74</sup> The Nigerian Federal constitution of 1953 permitted native authority forces; the Northern Region maintained the system, the Mid-Western Region abolished local forces, while the Eastern Region decided to establish them.<sup>75</sup>

### *The Army*

The police had the responsibility for maintaining law and order. The various colonial armies were held in reserve in case of any large scale challenge to authority. In British colonies the official attitude towards the armed forces often reflected the view traditionally held in the United Kingdom: that the army should have a low profile in matters of public order.<sup>76</sup> British colonial armies were relatively small, and by the late 1930s little more than lightly armed gendarmeries. Total British colonial troops in Africa in 1930 numbered 12,000; the only European troops were a battalion stationed in Khartoum.<sup>77</sup>

British colonial armies had three roles: the defence of the territorial frontiers, to provide aid to the civil power, and to aid a neighbouring colony if requested. The primary function was the maintenance of internal security. 'These forces', wrote Leopold Amery the Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office in 1919, 'are primarily and normally intended for military police purposes, they are so vitally connected with the local administration at every stage'.<sup>78</sup> Fifteen years later a Colonial Office memorandum spoke of the military as 'the power in reserve behind the civil authority to check any subversive movement or incipient disorder among people still to a great extent in a primitive stage of society'.<sup>79</sup> If the military

74. With the extension of Government Police Force in the Sierra Leone Protectorate in 1954 the Governor clarified the judicial function of Paramount Chiefs: 'one of the primary duties of Paramount Chiefs is to maintain law and order in their chiefdoms and to prevent crime. In the Protectorate as a whole in the forthcoming organization, the Chiefs will retain their function unchallenged, parallel with the Police. In the rural areas administered by the Chiefs the responsibility will therefore continue to lie with them as far as they are able to exercise it'. *Introduction of Police Forces . . . Protectorate*, Appendix II, p. 7.

75. Tamuno, *Police and modern Nigeria*, ch. 4; Cyprian O. Okonkwo, *The police and the public in Nigeria* (London/Lagos 1966) pp. 9–10. See also R. Anifowse, *Violence and politics in Nigeria. The Tiv and Yoruba experience* (New York 1982) ch. 4, for examples of the use of native authority police during the Tiv disturbances of 1960–64.

76. Keith Jeffrey, 'The British Army and internal security 1919–39', *Hist. J.* 24, No. 2 (1981), provides an example of military aid to the civil power in the United Kingdom.

77. British forces are covered in two semi-official histories: H. Moyses-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles. A study in the military history of East and Central Africa* (Aldershot 1956); and A. Haywood and F. A. S. Clarke, *The history of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot 1964). See also Anthony Clayton, 'Concepts of power and force in Colonial Africa 1919–1939', unpub. paper African History Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London, Oct. 1978; also Clayton and Killingray, 'The British military presence in Africa', *ibid.* May 1982. Much more detail on the British colonial military in Africa is contained in two memoranda in Rhodes House Library, Oxford: Clayton on the KAR, and Killingray on the RWAFF.

78. P.R.O. CO 445/48/27111, Amery to Kirke at War Office, 5 May 1919.

79. P.R.O. WO 32/4141, Colonial Office Memorandum, secret, 7 March 1936.

forces in one colony proved inadequate in an emergency reinforcements could be brought in from a neighboring colony as happened when Nigerian troops were rushed to the Gold Coast during the riots of February 1948.

Army officers were white and seconded from the British regular army; the rank and file came from the supposed 'martial races'. Thus in West Africa recruits were drawn from Northern Nigeria and the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, from men identified as 'martial' and generally referred to as 'Hausas'. Invariably neither term was correct. In the eyes of British officers the ideal soldier was a non-literate peasant who could be disciplined and trained; a prevalent idea, and belief, was that the soldier transferred his allegiance from his chief to a white officer and regiment. Ex-soldiers served with the Reserves and many Europeans joined the Volunteers or Territorials, additional forces that could be called on by the authorities in the event of internal unrest. In settler colonies, such as Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, separate white forces existed although even there the government employed African soldiers and police. For example, the para-military British South African Police in Southern Rhodesia was ostensibly white but at least one-third of its troopers were African.

In the inter-war years British colonial governments rarely required the military to support law and order. The Gold Coast may serve as an example. It was a relatively peaceful colony; military assistance from the Gold Coast Regiment was only called for on a few occasions, all fairly minor incidents. Not that the civil authorities ignored preparations to combat serious internal unrest. Following a Colonial Office instruction a local committee met in February-March 1919 and prepared plans to safeguard the colony against threats to law and order. As an extra precaution an armoured car was constructed in the Public Works Department workshop at Kumase. Officers in the Gold Coast Regiment tended to be less sanguine than civil officials about the threats to internal security; at times they became almost paranoid in their assessment of the political situation in the colony. A signal example is the military intelligence report on Ashanti in 1922.<sup>80</sup>

As in other colonies the primary concern of government was to reduce military expenditure. Governor Guggisberg, on taking up office in 1919, argued that 'tribal risings were improbable', that military expenditure should be cut but the strength of the police and para-military Northern Territories Constabulary should be maintained.<sup>81</sup> A similar confidence in internal peace was expressed by the Colonial Office in the memoranda on 'Internal Security in the Colonies' in 1926 and 1930. The latter report commented that 'there is no need to anticipate any serious trouble in the

80. National Archives of Ghana, Accra. ADM 12/5/59, 'Internal intelligence report on the population, 1922'; also Dunn and Robertson, *Dependence and opportunity*, p. 97.

81. P.R.O. CO 445/60/31097, Guggisberg to Churchill, secret, 8 June 1919.

Gold Coast where there has been unexampled prosperity for the past ten years. The recent fall in the price of the staple crop, cocoa, has checked the rise of wealth, but no trouble is to be apprehended beyond occasional tribal disputes which may lead to local riots of village against village'.<sup>82</sup> In those circumstances armed police could be relied upon to re-establish law and order. The late Harold Blair, District Officer at Tamale in the Northern Territories throughout the 1930s, has written: 'I never once had occasion to call on the military in the tribal battles or riots I dealt with. Generally I rode out with a walking stick and perhaps one policeman. At the most, on one or two occasions, I went out with the mounted patrol (police). I never had to fire a shot'.<sup>83</sup> The para-military Northern Territories Constabulary was disbanded as an economy measure in 1929. It was the hope of some civil officials that the Gold Coast, in a relatively short time, would be administered by an unarmed police force; black bobbies on bicycles acknowledged by peaceful communities!

#### *Other Forces*

The police and army, plus the reserves, did not represent the only forces available to colonial governments in the event of the breakdown of law and order. Other official uniformed and disciplined bodies of men existed, such as cattle guards, prison officers, and customs men, many of whose members were former soldiers or policemen. Certain mining companies, particularly in southern and central Africa, maintained private compound police forces.<sup>84</sup> In the early years of colonial rule governments also called upon 'friendlies', or levies, to turn out on punitive expeditions against neighbouring peoples. Undisciplined irregulars, armed with a motley assortment of weapons, acted as guides, scouts, and foragers in mopping-up operations. Until 1910 they were regarded as a normal and acceptable support for regular troops engaged in punitive expeditions. At times an ill-defined line separated regulars from irregulars. This is well illustrated by British attempts to recruit Babatu's freebooters to the Gold Coast Constabulary in 1897. The Committee of Imperial Defence in 1909 recommended that levies should no longer be used. However, they appear in the Gold Coast defence plans of 1924, and irregulars continued to be used in the Southern Sudan (a territory administered by the Foreign Office) until the 1930s.

82. P.R.O. CAB 21/368, 'Internal security in the colonies', 1930 and Addendum 1931.

83. Rhodes House Library, Oxford. Mss. Afr. s. 1734 (245) Harold Blair letter to David Killingray, 5 Aug. 1981.

84. Charles van Onselen, 'The role of collaborators in the Rhodesian mining industry 1900-1935', *Afr. Affairs* 72, 289 (Oct. 1973). The Sierra Leone Selection Trust Ltd formed a Diamond Protection Force in 1935; by 1950 it numbered 85, by 1957 662, and by 1971 a total of 1,313 men plus 245 auxiliary police paid for by the Company, an increase relative to the rise in illegal diamond mining; Peter Greenhalgh, *West African diamonds 1919-83. An economic history* (Manchester 1985) pp. 171-72.

The number of Europeans in colonial Africa, other than colonies of white settlement, was relatively small but many men, especially after the First World War, possessed and had experience in the use of firearms. Such skills could be regularly rehearsed with the military volunteers and reserves or in bodies sponsored by governments, such as Local Defence Associations, the Legion of Frontiersmen, and rifle clubs. Wingate in the Sudan in 1916 created the Sudan Reserve Corps, a force composed of Europeans and those of European descent, designed to aid the government in the defence of the country and to suppress internal unrest.<sup>85</sup> Kenya had a similar body of volunteer police, the Kenya Police Reserve, which was something like a 'burgher force'.<sup>86</sup> Following the Asante rising of 1900 the authorities in the Gold Coast formed volunteer companies, including machine gun sections, from Europeans in the mines, on the railways, and in certain towns. For some time rifle clubs received government subsidies, an economical third line of defence for the colony. This eventually lapsed in most colonies but when internal unrest was feared to be imminent they were reformed. Governor Hodson of the Gold Coast in the late 1930s attached 'much importance to each mine establishing a Rifle Club, the nucleus of which could be invaluable in the case of any rising as the members would be in a position to protect and defend the vital points of the mines, especially the Power House, until the Government could send troops'.<sup>87</sup>

Naval vessels—the proverbial gunboats—enforced the colonial presence on the coastal and riverine areas of West Africa in the 19th century. This role continued to a lesser extent in the 20th century with the great guns of warships providing a symbolic and actual demonstration of European power. Sailors and marines supported troops in the Gold Coast in 1900, and detachments were brought up from the Simonstown naval base in South Africa during the Tshekedi Khama 'flogging' case in Bechuanaland in 1933. After the First World War air power was advocated as a more effective and economical means of policing the empire, particularly the vast and inaccessible regions on the periphery of European control. All the colonial powers in Africa, including South Africa, employed aircraft to 'pacify' people and curb unrest; the British used the Royal Air Force mainly in Somaliland and the Southern Sudan.<sup>88</sup> After 1950 air power played an increasingly important role in transporting troops and police

85. Bukhari, 'Military aspects of internal security' p. 166.

86. Clayton, 'Thin blue line', p. 63.

87. OC Gold Coast Regt. to Batty, 6 Oct. 1938, quoted by Jeff Crisp, 'Labour resistance and labour control in the Ghanaian gold mining industry', unpub. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980, p. 208.

88. David Killingray, 'A swift agent of government. Air power in British colonial Africa 1916–1939', *Jl. Afr. Hist.* 25, 4 (1984).

within colonies and in anti-colonial wars; the RAF bombed the forest hideouts of the Mau Mau during the rising in Kenya in the 1950s.

### *Organizing Colonial Security*

The colonial state possessed autocratic powers. Government was usually by decree or proclamation, while a battery of laws and reserve powers were directed at the maintenance and preservation of the colonial order. Crucial to that order was the restriction on the import and sale of firearms and gunpowder. International agreements sought to control the trade of modern rifles to sub-Saharan Africa and colonial governments attempted to regulate by registration and taxation the possession of older weapons and ammunition.<sup>89</sup> Whenever trouble was suspected a government could use its powers to clamp down, or ban, sometimes gently through the courts with trials for sedition, or more fiercely with censorship, arbitrary arrest and deportation. All of these powers increased with wartime emergency legislation in 1914–18 and 1939–45. Pass laws in white settler colonies also enabled some control to be exercised over the movement of ordinary people, although perhaps not as effectively as has sometimes been suggested.

The deployment of police and military in a colony reflected internal security considerations. Military headquarters, for example those at Kaduna, Kumase and Khartoum, stood in strategic centres at the heart of newly conquered territories, the forts and barracks intended to overawe recently rebellious Mahdists and Asantes. Certain railway lines also had a strategic military function; the line to Kumase, opened in 1903 shortly after the suppression of the Asante rebellion, was equipped with an armoured train and stores of timber and sandbags ready for improvised defences at strategic stations. Certain roads also had a strategic purpose, early mapping and construction being undertaken by military surveyors and engineers. Armoured cars, first introduced into the Sudan in 1908, became a regular feature of military patrols in the inter-war years. The King's African Rifles in the 1930s built up a fleet of troop carrying vehicles for operations in the thinly peopled Northern Frontier District.

Early communication systems relied on runners and carrier pigeons. The telegraph, which was also vulnerable, was superseded in the 1930s by closed radio systems operated by the police and military. Annual manoeuvres frequently posited a breakdown of law and order, or were held in areas where there had been unrest, for example in those parts of Northern Rhodesia effected by the *Mwana Lesa* movement in the mid-1920s.

89. Dunn and Robertson, *Dependence and opportunity*, pp. 87–8 for Asante; Killingray, 'Colonial army in the Gold Coast', p. 134, for an example of troops being used to search for illegal arms and ammunition in the Ahanta, Sekondi, and Dixcove areas in 1921.



Methods of retribution perhaps can be briefly added under the heading of 'organizing security'. In the early colonial years the usual response to rebellion and disorder was a punitive expedition. This consisted of a military or police force, possibly supported by levies, armed with light artillery, marching through the 'troublesome' country burning villages and crops, lifting cattle and occasionally engaging in brief fights with 'hostiles'. The result was a swathe of destruction and a handful of government casualties in exchange for many more injuries inflicted on their African opponents. Soft-nosed Dum Dum bullets, developed specially for colonial warfare and in use in Africa upto 1914, inflicted hideous wounds. And the destruction of crops and cattle all too often condemned whole communities to acute food shortages and possibly death from famine.<sup>90</sup> Prisons ranked among some of the first buildings constructed by colonial rulers. Old forts on the West African coast, tin huts and barbed wire compounds all constituted early prisons. An institutionalized penal service followed closely behind the formation of a colonial police force.<sup>91</sup> Imprisoning offenders cost money and removed labour from the market although prisoners could be employed in construction work by the Public Works Department or hired out to European farmers. A system of fines, the stocks, and whipping, were thought by many European administrators to be more effective and practical means of punishment.<sup>92</sup> Fines could be imposed on individuals, or on whole communities under the Collective Punishment Ordinances, payment being made in kind or money. Whipping cost very little to the colonial authorities. Native authorities administered many of the prisons and the courts in certain parts of Northern Nigeria had power to impose capital sentences. Although customary punishments supposedly repugnant to European standards had been banned, Lugard allowed emirs to retain both beheading and drowning as 'humane' methods of execution.<sup>93</sup> Generally the colonial authorities shot or hanged, usually the latter. Under Native Administration rule, and well into the 1930s, executions often took place in public as a warning and example and also to show that justice had

90. Robert O. Collins, *Shadows in the grass. Britain in the Southern Sudan 1918-1956* (New Haven 1983), ch. 6 for examples of punitive expeditions Lugard in Northern Nigeria preferred 'the destruction of life to the destruction of food, to punish the guilty rather than those not guilty. He believed that expeditions must 'inflict severe punishment' to 'thoroughly deter the people from a repetition of crime'; Nicolson, *Administration of Nigeria*, pp. 148-9.

91. Alan Milner, *African penal systems* (London 1969). L. C. Kerchner, *The Kenya penal system: past, present and prospect* (Washington DC, 1981).

92. On flogging and imprisonment see Lugard, *The dual mandate*, pp. 558-61; Crocker, *Nigeria. A critique*, p. 59; Hailey, *African survey*, pp. 308-15; Julius Lewin, *Studies in African native law* (Oxford 1947) pp. 92-3; T. Oluwale Elias, *The nature of African customary law* (Manchester 1956) pp. 258-88; Alan Milner, *Nigerian Penal System* (London 1972) ch. 11.

93. F. D. Lugard, *Political memoranda 1913-1918*. Memo VIII, para. 3c. Beheading was abolished in Northern Nigeria in 1936. See further Margery Perham, *West African passage*, pp. 79 and 162; also Rhodes House Library, Oxford. RWAFF Collection Mss. Afr. s. 1734 (111), Cromartie, p. 2.

been carried out.<sup>94</sup> In spite of the supposed refining presence of British rule many African polities ran prisons and inflicted punishments which were both brutal and harsh.<sup>95</sup>

Colonial rule was not sustained solely by coercion although the demonstrations of European power in peace time, and particularly in the two World Wars, must have convinced many Africans of the invincible might of the colonial state.<sup>96</sup> A variety of political mechanisms and social stratagems had the purpose of gaining and securing African acquiescence. Anthony Kirk-Greene has suggested that colonial rule rested upon 'coercion, collaboration, confidence, and competence'.<sup>97</sup> More recently Terence Ranger, writing about Northern Rhodesia, has argued that colonial governance 'required a shared system of ideology which linked rulers and ruled', and that this was created 'around the idea of the Imperial monarchy'. The might and majesty of colonial governors, and also of lesser officials, helped to emphasize this role and relationship. Awards of medals, ritual royal salutes, royal visits, ecclesiastical hierarchies, and organizations such as the Boy Scouts, all played a part in cultivating African acquiescence in the inter-war years.<sup>98</sup> But perhaps the weakness of this interesting argument is in the assumption that traditional rulers actually had *shared* interests with the people whom they ruled. All too often chiefs used their position and power to exploit those under their authority; instead of a 'shared' ideology with people many chiefs were feared and disliked. In urban areas such measures of social control, if indeed they did exist, would have had little effect. On the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt in the 1930s industrial unrest and violence disturbed the colonial order; although government forces were relatively weak in firepower they nevertheless used firm-handed means to suppress strikes with considerable loss of life.<sup>99</sup>

94. Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, p. 82; C. Clifton Roberts, *Tangled justice* (London 1937) ch. XI describes the reintroduction of public execution in an area of Uganda following an outbreak of violent crime in the 1930s. Milner, *Nigerian penal system*, pp. 335–7. H. A. S. Johnson ed., *A selection of Hausa stories* (Oxford 1966) pp. 167–9 for 'The last public execution in Sokoto'. H. A. L. Ward Price, *Dark subjects* (London 1939) pp. 90–1.

95. Elizabeth Isichei, *A history of the Igbo people* (London 1976) p. 135, for an example of an Igbo prison in 1920. For a Northern Nigerian example see Perham, *West African passage*, p. 120.

96. Soldiers, artillery, warships and aircraft all demonstrated colonial power. Demonstrations of power were often made to impress people, e.g. a military parade at Kumase before Asante chiefs in 1908, Dinka and Nuer chiefs in the Sudan assembled to witness the destructive power of machine guns in 1928.

97. A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The thin white line: the size of the British Colonial Service in Africa', *Afr. Affairs* 79, 314 (Jan. 1980) p. 38. One is also reminded of Sir John Munro's claim in Madras in 1824 that 'integrity is one of the main supports of our Power'. Maclean in the Gold Coast in the 1830s–40s claimed that British influence and authority rested largely upon the 'strict and impartial administration of justice'.

98. T. O. Ranger, 'Making Northern Rhodesia Imperial: variations on a royal theme, 1924–1938', *Afr. Affairs* 79, 316 (July 1980) p. 350.

99. There was considerable unrest on the Copperbelt and the Northern Rhodesia Government used force to suppress it. By contrast the much stronger Southern Rhodesia Government, in the period from 1918 to 1959, 'never had to fire a shot in anger at its African subjects', Ian Henderson, 'Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia, 1900–1953. A study in the limits of colonial power', unpub. PhD thesis, Edinburgh Univ., 1972, pp. 168–9.

In an attempt to strengthen its position the Northern Rhodesia government used mass communications as a means of social control. A government publication, *Mutende* ('peace' in Bemba) was produced from 1936 until 1953, initially to counter Watchtower literature and in response to the copperbelt strikes of 1935. During the Second World War colonial governments set up information departments which continued after 1945 to present propaganda through radio broadcasts, official publications, and films.<sup>100</sup> In 1935 Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, spoke of the value of broadcasting 'to uphold the Colonies, British principles, ideas and culture, so that the peoples of the Colonies should appreciate more and more the privilege they enjoyed in membership of the Empire. In the final resort', he argued, 'it would be such appreciation of the Empire and not armed force that would hold the Empire together'.<sup>101</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In the years from 1920 to 1950 British colonial Africa was relatively peaceful. There were few serious assaults on the colonial authority and none that were regarded as real threats upon the administration. During this time, especially in the inter-war years, British administrative control was generally light. The introduction and extension of indirect rule meant effectively a retreat by the British from close control, or a failure to actually assume control. Policing was thin and often non-existent over much of the African empire and African 'traditional' rulers had the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order. In the period of run-up to the transfer of power (1954–64) serious unrest and rebellion occurred in a limited number of colonies; only in Kenya during Mau Mau was there a situation close to 'a security state', as existed in India in the war years 1939–45, and only in Nyasaland in 1959 did the colonial state assume such arbitrary powers that the Devlin Commission called it 'a police state'.<sup>102</sup>

But if most of *administrative* Africa was relatively peaceful what of the vast areas that were barely under formal control despite that process after 1945 which has been called the 'second occupation of Africa'? Government policing was extended but violence, and often serious violence and crime attended by numerous deaths, continued to pose a threat to ordinary people. Institutional violence by traditional African rulers also continued; ethnic disputes and religious conflicts all too frequently resulted in bloodshed. Colonial control was highly selective and often only superficial. Colonial

100. Rosaleen Smyth, 'The development of government propaganda in Northern Rhodesia up to 1953', unpub. PhD thesis, Univ. of London, 1983, and 'War propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia', *Afr. Affairs* 83, 332 (July 1984).

101. P.R.O. CO 323/1338/5801/23, Record of discussion, 4 Sept, 1935.

102. Roland Hunt and John Harrison, *The District Officer in India 1930–1947* (London 1980) ch. 10. *Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry* (Devlin Report) (Cmnd 814, (London 1959)).

rulers rarely got to grips with African societies; colonial institutions, the panoply of alien laws and the forces of law and order, barely touched village Africa. Afigbo argues that in south eastern Nigeria 'the political organization of the Igbo village group never broke down or got disorganized under colonial rule, much as its area of competence was curtailed by the establishment of an all-interfering central government. . . . Even today [1970s] these institutions remain alive and vigorous in the context of village-group politics. In spite of the heavy paraphernalia of modern government, the greater majority of the Igbo are kept on the path of lawful conduct not only by the police and the army, but also by traditional controls exerted at the village-group level'.<sup>103</sup>

During and following the transfer of power the African scene was increasingly disturbed by party political rivalry which often posed a serious threat to law and order.<sup>104</sup> The independent state took over the forces of law and order, continued the late colonial expansion of the police and military and also added new bodies that had an overt security purpose. The police, but particularly the military, in many states became increasingly politicized and the maintenance of law and order, as indeed breaches of that law and order system, all too often assumed a political form. The major function of the military in the vast majority of African states remains the same as its colonial counterpart—the maintenance of internal security.

103. Afigbo, *Sands of rope*, p. 349; also Milner, *Nigerian penal system*, p. 29.

104. E.g. see Anifowose, *Politics and violence in Nigeria*. K. W. J. Post and M. Vickers, *Structure and conflict in Nigeria 1960–66* (London 1973).