16. ASPECTS OF MODERN STATE PENETRATION IN AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Different academic disciplines have had different problems with the modern African state.

Pursuing their discipline's traditions as rooted, for a century or more, in the North Atlantic intellectual and political culture, constitutional lawyers, political scientists and students of public administration have never had to rediscover some problematic modern African state which professional blinkers had at first blinded from their vision (cf. Hodgkin 1956). Yet one could chide them for taking the imported constitutional and bureaucratic organizational models at face value. Carried away by a belief in 'modernization' and 'nation-building', they were (as e.g. Gonidec has argued: 1978, 1983) slow in appreciating the complex socio-political realities that made light with the formal administrative structures that were so confidently implanted on the African soil with the advent of the colonial state, and so proudly revised at the emergence of independent African states, around 1960. It is only since 1970 that these disciplines have addressed such features as patronage and class formation; ethnicity and regionalism; grossly inadequate patterns of state legitimation, information and participation; the often unchecked organizational and technological power of the military; the nature of international and intercontinental inequality; and the resilience (in some incapsulated, redefined form) of historical African political conceptions, such as focus on traditional rulers, precolonial polities, and ethnic groups. Alternatively, African historiography has, for a long time, been so fascinated by pre-colonial African states that the study of the modern African state was unduly postponed.

Still other shortcomings have characterized the case of the social sciences in the narrower sense: sociology and anthropology. For the latter, one could claim, with little exaggeration, that the

discovery of the modern state in Africa only began more than half a century after anthropologists (under the tacit or explicit protection of the colonial version of that modern state) had begun to study African communities. Despite the fact that from the outset the economic, social, political and ideological dynamics of these communities had been deeply affected, if often only from a distance, by colonialism, anthropological theory and method were such that (as long as one gave the local remnants of precolonial states their due, and underplayed the extent to which these were colonial neo-traditional artifacts) one could largely ignore the colonial state. Even so one could still rise to such mythical professional heights as occupied by Evans-Pritchard, Fortes and Gluckman (cf. Asad 1973). Although on a personal level very often sympathetic to the nationalist struggle, African independence found the anthropological profession largely unprepared, with a few notable exceptions (1). In the aftermath of African Political Systems (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940) anthropologists were still sharpening the theory of acephalous, stateless societies, and comfortably managed to find such societies within African colonial states (Colson 1962; Middleton & Tait 1958; for a modern critique, cf. Nature 1982). The development of an anthropological approach to the modern African state, both colonial and post-colonial, only started in earnest towards the end of the 1960s (cf. Swartz 1968; Turner 1971; Meillassoux 1970). This was partly a somewhat delayed response to the changing political realities in Africa itself (which did not always facilitate the type of field-research anthropologists had habitually engaged in, and even forced many anthropologists to pose as sociologists or historians). Moreover, African anthropology was affected by more general discussions, including those on the limitations of the structural-functionalist approach; on the allegedly weak nature of the modern state elsewhere in the Third World (as initiated by Alavi); the rekindling (by such authors as Poulantzas, Milliband and Laclau) of the classical Marxist theoretical debate on state and capitalism; and the tentative models of ethnicity and primordial attachments as propounded by mainly political scientists (Geertz 1963). Perhaps a major factor of the emerging anthropological interest in the state was

the general rallying around the (inescapably state-orientated) issues of development and under-development; these issues have gradually come to dominate the genuine human concern, the rhetorics, and the funding structures of social science research on Africa.

As specialists in small-scale socio-political processes on the grassroots level, anthropologists have access to one half of the answer to the empirical, methodological and theoretical questions that the modern state in Africa raises - but in order to perceive this half as such, and to present it meaningfully in a wider context involving broad national and continental formal structures and prolonged historical periods, cross-fertilization is needed with the other disciplines mentioned.

The workshop of Belgian and Dutch researchers on the African state, held in Antwerp, 20-21 December, 1984, provided such a context. It was the second of its kind, the first having taken place in Leiden, December 1981 (cf. van Binsbergen & Hesseling 1984). In 1981 the workshop's emphasis had been on somewhat furtive mutual exploration across our national and disciplinary boundaries, and on the presentation of the ongoing research of each of the participants, without any more specific unifying theme than that of the African state in general. In 1984 the conveners dared to be more ambitious. Considering the fact that, among the likely participants, specialists of the grassroots level ('anthropologists') were neatly balanced with specialists at the national and international level (constitutional lawyers, political scientists and students of public administration), it was felt that the theme of state penetration at the local level would bring out and combine the best that either side would have to offer: the attempted linkage (however problematic) between our respective disciplines was to reflect the actual linkage (often much more problematic) between national and local levels of socio-political organization and action in the African societies and polities we had studied. We envisaged a focussed confrontation of case studies and general statements, in an attempt to further a growth and convergence of more systematic insights to which all the various disciplines represented were hoped to contribute.

THEMES AND TOPICS IN THE STUDY OF STATE PENETRATION IN MODERN AFRICA

State penetration in modern Africa is still a very broad topic indeed, involving not only a number of disciplines but also a variety of levels of analysis, of methods, and of underlying theoretical approaches (2). It is not the intention of the present concluding chapter to present an exhaustive view, nor to formulate the synthetic theory that so far has been missing in this field of enquiry. However, overlooking the contributions to this volume, we felt that they could be meaningfully subsumed under the following four headings:

1. Anthropological and historical perspectives
2. Institutional and legal perspectives
3. Perspectives of development and mobilization
4. Towards a theoretical perspective

We shall first briefly discuss each of these four topics in an attempt to situate our contributors' positions in the general field. From there, drawing on the inspiration of these contributions and of our conference discussions in general, we shall proceed to more comprehensive theoretical observations.

Anthropological and historical perspectives

Under this general heading we comprise anthropological studies which take as their point of departure African communities at the local or regional level, and thus concentrate on the receiving end of state penetration, tracing changing political relations with a geographically and structurally distant state in the context of a local economic, social, political and ideological structure. The modern African state, perceived as still a somewhat alien actor in the local setup, is itself largely left unanalysed. Methods of enquiry and underlying theoretical perspectives are mainly those of anthropology.

As a metaphor, the concept of state penetration is as crude as the most prosaic representation of the sexual act, and as mechanical as the terminology that classifies electrical connectors as either

male or female ones. Here history may allow us to arrive at greater subtlety: in a meso- or macro perspective such historians as Bundy (1979), Clarence-Smith (1979), Fage (1978), Geschiere (1982), Iliffe (1979), Jewsiewicki (1984) and Wrigley (1978) have come to problematize the modern state in a way that could be very illuminating to anthropologists working from the local level upwards. A case in point is Hans Schoenmakers's analysis of the 'Establishment of the colonial economy in Guinea Bissau', an argument which encompasses more than a century, and which shows Portugese state penetration in the regional economy of Upper Guinea to have been far from mechanical or straight-forward. Similarly, in his contribution on 'The post-colonial state, "state penetration" and the Nkoya experience in Central Western Zambia', Wim van Binsbergen argues how, in contemporary Zambia, what initially looks as simply increasing state penetration between the early and late 1970s, in fact reflects a very complex historical process of centuries. If one were to speak of state penetration here, it would have begun not with the post-colonial state but at the very moment (some time in the eighteenth century) when autarkic communities, through a combination of endogenous factors and the emanations of the distant Lunda state and an even more distant mercantilism, began to be involved in a tributary mode of production centring on local royal courts, thus creating the preconditions for statehood... In this one Zambian case, and very likely in many other contexts, the notion of state penetration thus would seem to obscure more fundamental relationships that would better be discussed in a rather different idiom. What looks as defective or increasing state penetration, might be attributed to collective historical experiences of a rather different, and sub-national (regional or purely local), nature. And such patterns are scarcely revealed by exclusively synchronic approaches: the penetration of limited selected elements of modern statehood in a short-term perspective, often presupposes a much wider process of incorporation in a long-term perspective.

Thus it is meaningful to explore the link between modern state penetration and the 'Early State' in Africa (cf. Vansina 1966; Goody 1968; de Heusch 1972; Claessen & Skalník 1978), with special emphasis on the more recent transformations which these forms of political

organization have undergone in the colonial and the post-colonial period. In this context one would particularly consider 'Early States' as giving rise, in a process of modern state incorporation, to such specific sub-national identities as tend to be discussed under the headings of ethnicity and regionalism (cf. Amselle & M'Bokolo 1985). So-called traditional rulers or chiefs, and the encapsulated neo-traditional forms of political organization they are heading, often form the condensation cores of sub-national identities, to such an extent that the position of these rulers in post-independent Africa increasingly constitutes a reviving topic of empirical study today (cf. Reyntjens in press). In a more contemporary perspective, Peter Skalník's paper on 'Nanumba chieftaincy facing the Ghanaian state and Konkomba "tribesmen"' takes up a similar issue, tracing a sequence of violent conflicts suggestive of the limitations of modern state power in the face of ethnic conflict, with traditional rulers uneasily straddling both sets of relationships: at the national and the local level (3).

The concept of culture occupies a central position in idealist anthropology, much as the concept of production does in materialist anthropology (with the articulation of modes of production as the latter's major stock-in-trade). Wouter van Beek, in his paper on 'Cultural proletarisation in Cameroon', manages to use an inversion of the current materialist idiom to discuss the cultural effects of incorporation as viewed from a Cameroonian segmentary society, in such terms as 'articulation of modes of destruction' and 'cultural proletarisation'. While such usage drives home the seriousness of the situation, the systematic connexions between what may have to be termed 'symbolic, or ideological, production' on the one hand, and material production and its exploitation on the other, remain to be analysed. However, the paper links the ethnographic argument to one concerning the contemporary emergence and manipulation of popular culture in a context of state penetration - a topic to which we shall come back below.

Institutional and legal perspectives

We now turn to a cluster of studies that concentrate not on the passive but on the active actor in state penetration: the state in its many administrative and institutional forms, which constitute major vehicles of state penetration. While the grassroots studies may often leave the state itself in some indeterminate haze, with regard to the present cluster the danger exists that the receiving side, that of the clients of state bureaucracies, becomes relegated to some unstructured monolith in itself; avoiding this trap, it would be illuminating to specifically study the selective use of public services by such relatively powerless groups as women, or ethnic, regional and ideological minorities.

Probably the most conspicuous form in which the modern state penetrates at the local level is through public services: health care, education, agricultural extension work, maintaining of law and order, crisis intervention etc. For many peasants and urbanites in modern Africa, the perception of the state revolves largely if not exclusively, on the formal bureaucratic organizations created within this framework: the hospital, the school, the marketing board, the rural council, and perhaps even more so such institutions, in the domain of law and order (and intimidation) as the police, the prison and the para-military. African bureaucracies have been frequently studied in the context of public administration, and while in earlier periods research of this type may have tended to take for granted the formal structure of bureaucratic organization, recent studies often look at the manifold ways in which these structures (often at variance with original policy intentions, and transformed beyond recognition) are mediated to the members of African rural and urban communities, the clients of these organizations (Gautron 1983; Kontchou 1983).

When studying these bureaucratic mechanisms of state penetration, the lowest echelon of civil servants forms an interesting sociological category; their social background, processes of recruitment, attitudes, aspirations, problems of communication, income, power bases, networks of patronage, etc., deserve the closest attention. The relations between (lower) civil servants and their clients (peasants

and the urban poor, and citizens in general) are influenced by the relations between such civil servants and their superiors within the state bureaucracy - and further research along these lines might help us to identify the idiosyncratic logic of bureaucratic penetration. Here one would encounter such patterns as: the arbitrary imposition and proliferation of administrative territorial boundaries; bureaucrats' conflicts over competence, jurisdiction, and informal factional support; the tension between bureaucratic and general societal norms and values (so that an individual's bureaucratic position may be made subservient to kinship demands to the point of misuse of public funds and authority, or become a foothold for personal economic expansion in the market economy) - in other words the problem of corruption (cf. Willame 1972); the mutual spilling over between bureaucratic and traditional authority, both confronting and/or allying with modern political power. All this makes (cf. Thoden van Velzen 1977) for the potential of the state bureaucracy to generate networks of exchange and patronage (often ethnically, regionally or religiously based), which are far from envisaged in official policy declarations, yet come to form major vehicles of state penetration.

Within the more general framework of the Tanzanian development efforts (which makes his paper intermediate between the present and the next cluster of studies), Haile Asmerom takes up some of these issues in his paper on 'The Tanzanian village council'. This paper, situated in a body of work associated with the publication, nearly a decade ago, of the seminal Government and Rural Development in East Africa (Cliffe, Coleman & Doornbos 1977), already makes it very clear that it is not always easy to distinguish between state penetration as brought about by formal bureaucratic organizations (as studied by organization sociology) on the one hand, and the juridical mechanisms for state penetration (as studied by administrative law), on the other. Of course, any bureaucracy has its own juridical foundation, stipulating internal organization as well as its place and function within the overall state structure. The study of state penetration would be very incomplete without ample attention being given to administrative law.

That this is a more dynamic field of study than many anthropologists would suspect, allowing for considerable variation in the extent to which non-juridical, socio-political factors could be drawn into the argument, is clear from the presence, in this volume, of two overlapping studies relating to contemporary Algeria: Gauthier de Villers's piece on 'La révolution agraire et le pouvoir communal en Algérie', and Dirk Beke's on 'The administration of the "commune" in Algeria'. Not unlike Asmerom, Beke takes the formal institutional structure as his main point of reference, while de Villers's analytical distance enables him to appreciate the administrative dynamics concerned in a perspective of the socialist transformation of rural society in Algeria. Underlying these two papers is also the theme of decentralisation, which forms a central political and administrative issue in many African states today, and which in the present context could be interpreted as both the administrative-legal vehicle of state penetration, and the limitations to such penetration at the local level (Conac 1983; Michalon 1984).

National legal structures on the one hand render the state visible and make its power felt at the local level, but on the other hand enable us to explore the limits to effective state penetration, in so far as under the familiar conditions of legal pluralism in present-day Africa the state may aspire to legal hegemony but has seldom yet achieved a powerful monopoly (Chevallier 1983; Griffiths 1981; Fitzpatrick 1983). In her contribution on 'Réforme foncière au Sénégal', Gerti Hesseling argues how state penetration in the field of law not always has to result in the juxtaposition of two totally alien and unconnected legal systems - one local, the other national. Recent legal innovations are introduced within a more general economic and politico-legal context that (at least in the Senegalese case) has had more than a century and a half to gradually seep through to popular consciousness and societal practice. Hence the diversity of perceptions and interests between peasants and bureaucrats yet turns out to lead to fairly converging views on contemporary land tenure (5).

Finally there is also an obvious place here (although not in the present volume) for constitutional law, such as stipulates

fundamental human rights (sometimes also fundamental duties) which effect the linkage between the individual and the state in so far as they determine the nature and the extent of citizens' information and participation (cf. Nwabueze 1973; Conac 1979). The latter two concepts in themselves offer qualitative indicators of effective (and desirable) state penetration in a democratic context (cf. Hesseling 1985; Doornbos, van Binsbergen & Hesseling 1985; Reyntjens 1985; Ngom 1984; Gonidec 1983b).

Perspectives of development and mobilization

Having briefly dwelled on the organizational and administrative-legal forms of state presence on the peripheral African scene, it is now time to turn to their specific, both manifest and latent (unintended), functions in public life, and particularly in the peripheral economy of African countries. This third cluster has already been foreshadowed by Asmerom's argument on the specific instruments for rural development in Tanzania; and by Hesseling's discussion of national land reform: in many African countries state-initiated land reform has as an unintented effect, if not an explicit aim, the creation of a framework within which the historic rural communities and their non-capitalist relations of production can be effectively penetrated (Cf. Crousse et al. 1986).

Critical views of state penetration in Africa may claim that the dominant function of state services is to represent (i.e. serve the penetration of) the central state in the first place; their secondary function would then seem to be: to serve the interest of a bureaucratic elite and middle class whose main source of power and income is the national state; while finally the discharge of public functions in the interest of the local population would be relegated to an accidental side-effect, if that. This pessimist view is strongly present in Sjaak van der Geest's paper on 'Health care as politics: Missed chances in rural Cameroon'. Even as a form of state penetration the defective functioning of the governmental medical services in that country is claimed to be counter-productive: instead of rallying around a central state that dispenses health and medicine, the local

population is said to turn away from the state, not only for medical matters but in general.

Does the performance of state bureaucracies in other sectors of public life give reason to seriously doubt van der Geest's allegations? A case in point is state intervention with regard to the incorporation of peasants and marginal urbanites in the market economy: through the efforts of state marketing boards and agricultural extension work, or in the framework of development projects (6). In the present volume, these topics are represented (7) by Werner Cornelis's paper 'An analysis of the mechanism and evaluation of state penetration in rural Mali', and by Johan Pottiers's study of 'Food security, local administration and peripheral development in Northern Zambia' (8). Peasants are depicted as no longer looking to the state for solutions to their economic predicament, and the services that the state has set up, seemingly in order to alleviate this predicament, turn out to primarily or exclusively serve state penetration, at the expense of local initiative, control and economic growth. A similar concern forms the backbone of Asmerom's argument, where an interesting contrast is drawn between state penetration and development, the latter meaning both increased levels of rural productivity and peasants' continued or if possible increasing political competence concerning their own situation.

Is the price of economic development (9) not too often that the peripheral population is reduced to powerlessness? Must one expose much of the official development rhetoric as a thin ideological wrap around state aspirations of increased political control in the periphery? The present case studies offer ample empirical substantiation for the applicability of such a view in at least selected specific situations. But to the extent to which the failure of these development-orientated services estranges the peripheral population from the state (a point stressed by van der Geest), one might suspect that the state has other, more effective and less costly means at its disposal to effect successful penetration among the same people. Or is it simply that health care and increased income from agricultural production constitute the two desiderata that

so absolutely dominate the consciousness both of the rural populations involved and of international donors, that the state is persuaded to spread its limited resources for these services too thinly, with both economic and medical failure as an unavoidable result?

Since a pessimist, dismissive view of state penetration has become almost commonplace in studies of the relations between modern African states, and peasants and urban poor, we should ask ourselves to what extent such a view may yet take on, among less scrupulous researchers than our contributors, the characteristics of a scholars' myth? Those contemporary researchers who take the grassroots level as their point of departure in the study of the modern African state and thus are the main heirs to the anthropological tradition of an earlier day, can no longer afford to ignore the modern African state, but a profound scepticism bordering on cynicism is often the only response they can manage. Probably the fashionable appeal, also noticeable in the present volume, of Hyden's altogether too sketchy notion of an 'uncaptured' African peasantry (1980; cf. Geschiere 1984) owes much to these misgivings. The state is still perceived as doubly alien: both to their discipline as they see it, and to the peripheral population groups they study. And while familiarity may be said to breed contempt, much of the social sciences is there to show that alienness can inspire equally ugly feelings. Does the widespread cynicism concerning the African state always base itself on empirical proof relating to specific political and economic conditions?

The other, more macro-orientated mainstream in the contemporary study of the African state would take state structures much more for granted. It may be better equipped for the identification of the concrete mechanisms through which state penetration is effected; here, for instance, recent studies have come to emphasize strategies of regional planning, at a level intermediate between the grassroots and the national centre. Only when we move from global sweeping statements to detailed empirical observations of specific processes within a well-defined socio-political and economic environment, does it become possible to level meaningful, specific criticism at the structure and performance of modern African states. Then, also, the necessarily limited, but still tangible results of genuine commitment on the part

of bureaucrats and politicians in Africa may become discernable and appreciated. A closer look at our own class position as North Atlantic academics might also be conducive to greater modesty (cf. van Binsbergen 1984). State penetration, just like capitalist encroachment (cf. van Binsbergen & Geschiere 1985), cannot be automatically deemed a bad thing for the peasants and urban poor we identify with, and under certain conditions (which our scholarly research may help to specify, and which certainly imply the local political competence stressed by Asmerom) it may even begin to offer the solutions for the extreme predicament affecting these people.

The topics indicated under this heading all relate directly to the economic crisis of Africa in the 1980s. Can the continent's increasing inability to feed itself be attributed to ineffective state presence in the rural areas and in the distributive and management sectors of the economy, in other words to defective state penetration? Or, alternatively, is the very penetration of the state partly responsible for a stagnant economy?

Meanwhile, it is not only through such clearly developmental issues like health services or planned agricultural change that the modern African state endeavours to penetrate, with varying degrees of success and justification. Another aspect, unfortunately not treated in the present volume, is education. Above we already mentioned the contribution of ethnicity and patronage to state penetration. Moreover, the dynamics of state penetration include channels and processes of mobilization at the grassroots level. On the one hand one could think here of organizations which, from the national or international level, descend to the basis: political parties, women's movements, trade unions, Islamic brotherhoods, Christian churches and other religious and ideological organizations. Whereas the origin and the early development of such bodies was often situated outside the (colonial) state, and whereas they were initially often directed against that state, the post-colonial situation offers a varied picture of the ways in which such organizations tend to become caught up in the modern state. In extreme cases they have (often under reference to their role in the Independence struggle) become fully incorporated in the post-colonial state, as happened to dominant

political parties in many African countries - to the extent that the distinction between state and party has become ideologically blurred, with party membership turning into a major form of state penetration. In many other cases the state attempts to control such mobilization organizations with varying judicial and political measures; again we touch on constitutional law. The local-level reactions to this interaction between the state and voluntary organisations deserve our closest attention. To what extent, and because of what structural and accidental historical factors, is the state's hold on these mobilizing movements effective or ineffective, and in what direction does the process move? Do these movements engender counter-currents once more directed against the (post-colonial) state? Under what circumstances can these counter-currents grow into revolutionary and secessionist movements, or strike alliances with such movements (Buijtenhuijs 1978; Verhaegen 1966; Ranger 1985)? Can they team up with more 'traditional' sub-national identities such as indicated above? Do 'socialist' regimes in modern Africa display a significantly different response from 'liberal' or 'bourgeois' ones in this connexion?

Some of these issues are taken up in Piet Konings's discussion of 'The state and the Defence Committees in the Ghanaian revolution, 1981-1984'. His argument, relating to a very topical series of events in modern African politics, and highlighting the differential success of corporatist (ultimately populist) and collectivist tendencies within the recent Ghanaian revolution, shows the complexity and the limitations of state penetration through mobilization.

In addition to more or less clear-cut movements that have evolved (independently, or under state initiative) a specific organizational structure of their own, we should pay attention to the more diffuse ideological expressions of a growing national (particularly urban) popular culture. The emergence and internal coalescence of such national cultures can be seen to make use of music, dance, drama, representational and literary arts, cults; in this way they are selectively mediating an ancient cultural heritage (10), but also inventing and restructuring the new values and symbols of a multi-ethnic, dominantly-urban, peripherally capitalist society in modern Africa (cf. Ranger 1975; Fabian 1978). Often the forms,

organizational structures and contents in this field are to a considerable extent determined by North Atlantic cultural imperialism, and by both North Atlantic and Far East electronic technology. Yet, making a highly eclectic and innovative use of African cultural heritages, these national popular cultures may yet begin to gradually supplant the sub-national (neo-)traditional identities that, in a more particularistic fashion, continue to legitimate themselves by reference to a past long bygone. Van Beek shows how the results of such cultural incorporation (as compared with the situation immediately before effective penetration) is often far from reassuring. But by addressing themselves to the realities, frustrations and aspirations of Africa today, these expressions of an emerging popular culture have also formed a major (if diffuse) growth point of citizens' attitudes vis-à-vis the colonial and the post-colonial state - they are the cradle of a modern political culture. In so far as this culture includes historic, autochthonous elements (notably notions of sorcery and traditional rulers), these should not be mistaken for simple revivals from a pre-colonial past, but as essentially neo-traditional innovations, reflecting a recent symbolic and organizational transformation in the course of state penetration.

It is clearly for good reason that in the 1980s many students of African politics (11) have extended their fields of enquiry beyond party organisations, elite formation and voting behaviour, and turn their attention to 'popular modes of political action', sometimes including activities as relatively amorphous and unfocussed as petty crime, prostitution or students' clamouring for better facilities, but which yet could be argued to reflect on the interaction between state and citizen at the grassroots level. This line of argument owes much to Bayart's work on Cameroon and on Africa in general (e.g. Bayart 1979, 1983a, 1983b). In the present volume, this emergent approach is represented by Peter Geschiere's 'Hegemonic regimes and popular protest - Bayart, Gramsci and the state in Cameroon', to which we shall come back below. Working within the Belgian tradition of critical Zaïre studies (including such writers as B. Verhaegen and L. Martens, among others), a similar inspiration is behind Jean-Claude

Willame's 'Reflexions sur l'Etat et la société civile au Zaire' - an attempt to interpret the remarkable features of the post-colonial state of Zaïre (an extreme frequency of internal insurgencies; populist state-initiated mobilization under the aegis of 'authenticity'; and extreme intercontinental dependence) by a juxtaposition between 'civil society' and state - the latter manifesting itself, in present-day Zaïre, in an exceptionally pathological and chimerical form (12).

Beyond these rather anonymous mass aspects of modern popular (including political) culture, one could begin to ask how cultural elites and leaders (modern media, formal education, the intelligentia, artists, religious leaders and world religions) affect, perhaps dominate or exploit these processes. Do they each in their specific way contribute to the construction of a civil ideology which underpins the state and its dominant elite; in other words, do they construct and maintain 'ideological state apparatuses' which, among other factors, enable an imperfectly legitimated state yet to impose its hegemony? Or is their contribution to the ideological penetration of the modern state in everyday life not the whole story, and do their ideological expressions retain an element of protest, challenge and resistance - and if so, what sort of response do they then encounter from the part of the state and the citizens in general? At any rate, further explorations of the similarities and differences between state penetration on the one hand, and such forms of ideologico-organizational penetration as attend the spread of world religions and modern mass culture on the other, are well worth taking up.

Towards a theoretical perspective

The question whether modern state penetration in Africa is a good or a bad thing has obvious practical and political implications, but can hardly be said to advance our theoretical insight in the processes involved. Now African studies throughout have tended to concentrate on case studies and empirical generalizations, and as a regional specialization have not been remarkably conducive to the development of abstract theory. In this respect the present volume is rather

representative. However, a few illuminating attempts at generalization and theory formation are available among the contributions to the present volume.

Geschiere's chapter, reflecting on a good deal of the current literature on modern state penetration in Africa, and combining (in his concluding section) the emerging theory of hegemony formation with the paradigm of the articulation of modes of production that has captivated scholarly attention since the mid-1970s, comes perhaps closest to the formulation of a partial theory of the dynamics of state penetration. Stemming from an anthropologist-cum-historian, it is still somehow situated in the grassroots stream of approaches to the African state, and may yet require further elaboration on the legal, institutional and constitutional side in order to convince researchers more squarely identifying with formal approaches that take the central state, rather than local and regional political processes, as their point of departure. In fact Geschiere's emerging approach is strikingly transactional, in that it tends to redefine the accepted hierarchy of organizational levels (national, regional, local) as a rather inchoate field of essentially horizontal, complex and dialectical interaction, whose uncertain and ephemeral outcome (the creation of effective hierarchy and control centring on the state) is based more on success or failure of strategies of struggle, confrontation and alliance (focussed on personal interests and even on persons), than on structural characteristics of institutional units involved. Thus the process is altogether more complex and internally contradictory than Bayart's vision of one all-encompassing hegemonic projet would suggest. As a consequence, Geschiere's insights are heuristic and methodological rather than that their concrete substance is yet capable of generalization: the specific features of the field of conflict at a given time and place can lead to totally different outcomes - and, as in other domains of African studies today, the methods of anthropology gradually give way to those of an anthropologically-enlightened contemporary history.

Martin Doornbos in his paper on 'Incorporation and cultural "receptivity" to change' arrives at similar conclusions as Geschiere, albeit that Doornbos's conclusions are wrapped in a totally different

idiom (that of structural-functional cross-cultural comparison), and derive from a rather different theoretical inspiration (a much more classical anthropology, in combination not only with latterday political science but also with the accumulated experience of social-research institutes in East and South Central Africa in the 1950s and '60s). But also for Doornbos the process of state penetration remains essentially unpredictable as long as one concentrates on structural characteristics of the social units involved at the receiving end.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT COLLECTION

Bringing together a variety of disciplines in an attempt to highlight significant connexions between micro and macro levels in African political systems today, one can hardly be surprised that, out of the above panorama of possible themes and exciting lines of enquiry, only a few were actually pursued in the present collection of papers.

Probably in an attempt to explore untrodden ground, at least one classic theme of African political studies has remained under-represented: political parties; yet, as vehicles of state penetration par excellence, they deserve more than the cursory references they receive in the present collection.

Further it would appear that more specific attention could have been paid to the problems of legitimation that beset African modern states, and to a variety of partial solutions to this predicament, such as

- strategic use of c.q. control over the media (cf. Fisher 1985; MacBride 1980; Skurnik 1981);
- popular culture, either challenging the state or, in alliance with or downright engineered by that state, giving rise to what could be called African populism (cf. Fauré 1978; Jackson & Rosberg 1984);
- world religions, again as either challenging or underpinning the modern state; the obvious reference is Islam in West Africa (cf. Nicolas 1981 and references cited there), but also Christian cases could be cited, for instance with reference to Zambia (13).

- attempts to enhance state legitimation by the adoption of an official state ideology, ranging from 'scientific socialism' to 'authenticité'.

That the present collection would appear to display blind spots on these points is partly due to the fact that 'legitimation' and 'state penetration' have too long been considered to belong to a different realm of scholarly discourse. The legitimation of the state was then considered to constitute the final outcome, on the ideological plane, of a crude and still uncertain process (often characterized by great socio-cultural distance, lack of political participation in the periphery, and a considerable degree of physical and structural state violence) by which a central state power seeks to gain access to a geographical and/or social periphery. In such a context ideological factors are of eminent importance: they may reduce perceived distance, create incentives for identification and participation, and thus allow a reduction of the level of conspicuous and violent state presence. Alternatively, ideological factors may in this phase create new boundaries behind which peripheral citizens may entrench themselves, in the pursuit of an ethnic or religious local particularism.

However, it is no longer tenable to relegate issues of ideology and legitimation to the final phase of modern state penetration. Some of the papers in the present collection (Geschiere, Willame, Konings, van Beek, and van Binsbergen) already suggest that an ideological struggle is part of the process from the very outset, and that (failing the economic, bureaucratic and institutional incorporation of local communities) much of the process takes shape in ideological terms throughout. In this respect a remarkable shift in emphasis should not go unnoticed: whereas writers of a marxist signature now tend to stress ideological factors far beyond the materialist stereotypes so readily applied to them, it is the nonmarxists who, in their fascination with the material spoils of state penetration (in terms of 'development'), are less inclined to take up the ideological dimensions!

State penetration would appear to be, among other aspects, an ideological offensive, both from the centre and from the local

community. But even so, the present papers illustrate the failure of the state to legitimate and assert itself even despite all the above options, and as a consequence its being challenged by revolutionary alternatives, uprisings, secession movements (14), coups, or (by far the most common option) citizens' more passive withdrawal from civil participation. Yet as editors we would have liked to include more specific discussions of these ideological dimensions, which (as the present contributions by and large imply) may even take precedence over institutional and economic aspects as determinants of differential patterns of state penetration.

What appears to constitute a genuine blind spot is the international context of state penetration. The rise, in recent decades, of international organizations for development cooperation of a bilateral or multilateral nature (including such immensely powerful bodies as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (15)), introduces a strong external element. Have these development agencies (as suggested by Cornelis) effectively inserted themselves between the modern African state and its peripheral citizens, mediating between both, and possibly eroding national state power in a context of international and intercontinental economic and political dependency (16)? Another aspect of this international context is to be found in the field of law and international relations. The internal affairs of modern states (and this includes their relations with their citizens) are influenced (if not exactly determined) by constitutional arrangements stipulating fundamental rights, the legitimate exercise of political power etc.; these are often underpinned by international treaties, and by international public opinion as articulated by the media. A case in point is Zaïre, whose constitution and state ideology 'window-dress' the actual internal state performance and intercontinental dependency so as to maintain a level of international respectability in the eyes of North Atlantic patrons. Nor is this merely a matter of ideological mimicry: ultimately, internal state-citizen relations within African countries may be subject to the power politics between major blocs in the centre of the world system - who transport their competition to the African soil, where it becomes a major factor in the relations between, e.g., peripheral populations

of the Angolan, South African, and Ethiopian state (all displaying varieties of the East-West confrontation), or the Senegalese state (as a clear case of French imperialism within the Western bloc). In this connexion one could also think of more tangible transgressions of national boundaries: military action, and refugees, which together significantly contribute to the picture of modern African politics, but which were largely ignored in the present context of state penetration - perhaps since our central metaphor erroneously conveys a sense of increasing order rather than of increasing chaos and misery?

These and other omissions in our present collection do not necessarily reflect the state of scholarship in Belgium and The Netherlands today. We could not hope to cover the total research effort currently directed, in both countries, on the African state (17). Even the selection as represented at the conference could not be entirely reflected in the present volume, for practical reasons such as limitations of space and time, or the fact that some papers had already found another venue of publication. Where really disproportionate omissions threatened to occur, we decided to co-opt additional papers.

One major gap turned out to be unavoidable. If much of the intervention of the modern state at the local level in Africa today takes place in a context of 'development', we are clearly dealing with a field intensively covered by such disciplines as economics, geography, demography, agronomy, and the planning and evaluation specialities that have evolved in these fields in recent decades. We fully acknowledge the relevance of these approaches to our theme. However, for structural reasons beyond our control as conveners, disciplinary networks and organizations in both The Netherlands and Belgium have somehow led to a structure of academic exchange and a division of academic labour not conducive to the representation of these disciplines at our conference. On the other hand, when it comes to contents and substance, in modern African studies disciplinary boundaries tend to fade. We flatter ourselves that a sizeable part of the present collection of papers would not look out of place in the context of a conference of geographers and economists.

LIMITATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF STATE PENETRATION

Although this volume clearly brings out the extent to which the concept of state penetration has heuristic value and is capable of providing a common field of debate and exchange across disciplinary boundaries, we should not overestimate the theoretical and explanatory potential of what remains essentially a metaphor - not even a paradigm, let alone a theory.

Perhaps the most obvious limitation of the metaphor is that it tends to view the penetrating agent, the state, as a monolith (and one with phallic connotations at that). Of course we all know that the state is a very complex, multi-dimensional set of contradictory socio-political, economic and ideological relationships, only some of the most obvious ones of which have been highlighted above. One wonders how much of the initial insight that the metaphor suggests, remains once one tries to steer away from the reification it so clearly entails. Significantly, the theoretically most ambitious and complex contribution in this volume (Geschiere's) does not hinge on our central metaphor! It is here perhaps that a class analysis of modern African societies, which so far has failed to convince as an attempt at exhaustive description of contemporary relationships (18), may yet have the great advantage of drawing our attention to the selective and differential class interests behind state presence in the lives of African peasants and the urban poor: modern state penetration is, after all, to a considerable extent a form of class formation in an overall capitalist context. Konings's recent book (1986) on The state and class formation in rural Ghana is an eloquent statement to this effect.

The problem of monolithic over-simplification also exists at the receiving side, and there it turns out to be not only a conceptual but also a methodological problem. State penetration may not primarily be a matter of a confrontation between the modern state and atomistic individuals (the most likely unit of study in the popular type of superficial sample surveys administered by teams of research assistants), or defenseless peasant communities, but between that state and rather well-defined groups that (as urban or rural

communities, ethnic groups, perhaps also as religious bodies) cluster around some conscious sub-national identity, and which one can only approach through prolonged participant observation and more or less formal group interviews, in combination with the documentary methods of contemporary or not-so-contemporary history.

We have already pointed out the danger of too synchronic a view of state processes in Africa (for an extensive argument, cf. Lonsdale 1981). Understanding of the modern state often requires understanding of a complex local political history of considerable pre-colonial time depth. The African pre-colonial past was (at least for the present millenium) not predominantly stateless, and although the specific type of modern state (literate, rational, formal, bureaucratic - it is remarkable that few contributors have bothered to define the modern state at all) may be relatively new to Africa, state penetration in general was often not a phenomenon that started with the Scramble for Africa, or with North Atlantic involvement in general. Modern state penetration, therefore, may often constitute a particular, recent form of incorporation, building upon earlier processes of incorporation which partly shaped the peripheral citizens' selective appreciation of the modern state. In this light considerable attention should also be paid to the specific patterns of continuity and discontinuity between the colonial and the post-colonial state in their penetration efforts and successes.

Finally we should be conscious of the fact that the metaphor of state penetration is not totally neutral. It belongs to an idiom of meta-academic solidarity. In addition to its academic use, the model may easily provide a vehicle for the expression of such suspicion, scorn and protest in the face of the many and undeniable contemporary cases of state failure in Africa - in such fields as the food and energy crisis, rural development, internal justice and international relations. Here the sexual symbolism of the metaphor of state penetration can be explored to its full extent, reducing Africa, and the modern Third World in general, to an arena where brave but doomed pre- or extra-statal remnants (cultural, ethnic and linguistic minorities, segmentary acephalous societies and 'traditional' chiefdoms, secessionist movements, religious systems outside the

mainstream of world religions, systems of production and circulation outside the direct control of capitalism) are first 'captured' and then violated by a brutal state and the cynical and greedy personnel that fill its bureaucratic apparatus.

How to avoid the underlying stereotypes: the anachronistic assumption of non-penetration, of 'statal virginity', among the peripheral citizens of African states today; or the rhetorics of indiscriminately suspecting or condemning all state action, and by the same token automatically supporting all sub-national identities that confront the state? How to arrive at a positive, yet critical and independent academic contribution to the immense problems of Africa today?

While the refinement necessary to escape from ready stereotypes may not be found in the concept of state penetration itself, the studies collected in the present volume may go some way to suggest that that concept offers at least the heuristic inspiration for the sort of detailed and incisive research necessary for a more balanced and profound understanding of the relation between modern African states and peripheral local communities (19).

NOTES

1. E.g. Worsley 1964; and the authors discussed in Doornbos's paper as included in this volume.

2. Cf. Cliffe, Coleman & Doornbos 1977; and specifically Coleman 1977; Doornbos 1983 (which was also presented at our 1984 workshop); Coleman & Halisi 1983; Geschiere 1982; Elwert 1983.

3. Besides the arguments by Skalník and van Binsbergen as included in the present volume, this topic was represented at the conference by E.A.B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal's paper on 'L'Etat et les chefs coutumiers en Afrique', a shorted version of his inaugural address (in Dutch), University of Leiden, 1984.

4. Cf. Doornbos 1983; Samoff 1979; Leys 1976.

5. On the basis of the same research project of the African Studies Centre, Leiden, M. Sypkens Smit, in an oral presentation entitled 'What shall we do with the big bad wolf: Land tenure and village secrets in Diatock, a Diola village, Senegal', offered a picture of alleged non-penetration in South Senegal.

6. Among a great many relevant studies, some of which have already been referred to here, we mention Finucane 1974; Bates 1978, 1981; Dumont & Mottin 1983.

7. At the conference, these aspects of rural state penetration were also discussed in the context of a paper by A.N. Achterstraat, 'State intervention in agriculture and the peasant farmer's crop selection: The development of cotton growing in Senegal', which has meanwhile been published (in Dutch) in van Binsbergen & Hesseling 1984: 419-50.

8. The contrast between the pessimist view as propounded by Pottier's study, relating to Northern Zambia, and the more optimist argument by van Binsbergen on Western Zambia is only apparent: both are situated in the context of that country's poor and still declining rural economy; but while the latter forms Pottier's primary focus, van Binsbergen attempts to demonstrate how the historical background of the Nkoya ethnic minority has brought them to be fixated on political relations with the central state, within a situation of economic misery they have come to accept as inevitable. More in general on state penetration in Zambia, cf. Bratton 1980a, 1980b.

9. Even disregarding, for a moment, emergent rural class formation and increasing exploitation by a state-based middle class, factors which make for the uneven local distribution of the economic fruits of development.

10. Generally, in Africa, this selection includes (besides a concept of traditional rulers) sorcery beliefs, which in many contemporary

local contexts in Africa have been recorded as an expression of and a weapon in the confrontation between local-level concerns and the state-associated power of bureaucrats, chiefs and middle farmers. A Cameroonian case in point is Geschiere, in press, also presented at our 1984 workshop; for a Tanzanian case, cf. van Hekken & Thoden van Velzen 1972; for a Zambian case, cf. van Binsbergen 1975, which complements the picture of political attitudes at the village level as described in his paper in the present volume.

11. Partly against the background of earlier work, cf. Geschiere's note 5.

12. For a more general perspective on the various merely 'technical' ways of being a state cf. Jackson & Rosberg 1982, who - much like our 1984 conference discussions - dealt with the 'extra-territorial state'.

13. Cf. van Binsbergen 1981: 298f; for general discussions cf. Glélé 1981a, 1981b; Heijke 1984; Sinda 1983; Verhaegen 1977.

14. R. Buijtenhuijs discussed these and related topics (including ethnicity) in his paper on 'Les Toubou et la rébellion tchadienne', which was not available for inclusion in the present volume; however, see Buijtenhuijs, n.d.

15. Cf. World Bank 1981; Gruhn 1983; Helleiner 1983.

16. In this respect we regret that G. Diemer and E. van der Laan's conference paper on 'The relations between peasants and bureaucrats in small-scale irrigated agriculture on the Senegal river, 1975-1982' was not available for inclusion here: particularly in the discussion, it offered an interesting perspective on this theme.

17. Thus the 'Departement of Political and Historical Studies', one of the two research departments of the African Studies Centre, Leiden, since 1980 has concentrated its research and publications on the historical and contemporary dy

18. Cf. Mamdani 1976; Shivji 1976; Cliffe, Coleman & Doornbos 1977; Buijtenhuijs & Geschiere 1978; also Konings's concluding remarks in his paper as included here. In this respect it is relevant that Geschiere's version of Bayart is somewhat truncated, and particularly glosses over mechanisms of hegemony formation around the national power elite, as a viable alternative to class analysis.

19. We are indebted to P. Geschiere for comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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