

## BOOK REVIEWS

*African Railwaymen: Solidarity and Opposition in an East African Labour Force* by R. D. Grillo, African Studies Series No. 10, London, Cambridge University Press, 1973, xiii + 215 pp.

R. D. Grillo, an urban anthropologist, has made an important contribution to better understanding of the particular features of the African labor force although the basic concern of his study seems to be similar to those previously made by other social scientists interested in the African labor force.<sup>1</sup> In short, Grillo is concerned with finding of why the African labor force has developed certain behavioral patterns that he calls a dual orientation towards an urban and a rural commitment. The subject of his study is the railway workers of East Africa Railways and Harbours (EARH), living in Kampara, particularly those in the Nsambya Estate of EARH. Much valuable information was gathered by intensive fieldwork and by discussion with respondents.

In analyzing the behavioral patterns of railway workers, he presents a picture of a newly emerging type of industrial worker in East Africa. First, he found that there is a "modern" pattern of migration differing from that of the 1950s (p. 178). The railwaymen have a life pattern which is urbanized to a surprising extent as shown by their long service to EARH, while they retain very close links to the rural areas they came from. Second, his analysis leads to the conclusion that "the rural and urban areas of East Africa constitute a single field of social relationships" (p. 181). Third, complicated interactions between ethnicity and industrial status differentiation have been convincingly explained. But there seem to be three weak points in Grillo's study. The first of these weaknesses is that he argues very little of the prevailing agrarian structure from which the African railwaymen originated. This is important because the rural-urban continuum is strongly related to the very nature of the small-scale peasant farming system. Second, there is a gap between his samples who live on the estate and those who live off it (p. 3). From observations that I have made in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam a longer stay in an urban area is greatly determined by whether or not a worker can obtain housing accommodations not only for himself but for his family too. In this regard, sample bias is crucial. Third, Grillo takes into little account how the idea of his research can be incorporated in national development objectives. In other words, I fail to see, out of such an excellent academic undertaking, positive suggestions for Ugandan or East African national economic development in the broader meaning of the concept. This may sound like subjective pre-occupation, but I believe that one of the research worker's obligations is to make that research useful to the host country.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It seems that Grillo compares his findings to those of Walter Elkan's *Migrants and Proletarians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Development Studies, *Harnessing Research for Production, Dissemination and Utilisation*, IDS Occasional Paper No. 5 (Nairobi, 1972): "There has been a tendency for researchers to consider research to be an end unto itself: that once you have done the basic fact-finding and furnishing of data, you put it into a bound volume, give it to

At its simplest level, Grillo's study on African railwaymen is an analysis of man, individually or collectively living in two worlds at the same time: one an urban, industrial milieu of European origin, the other a rural, agricultural world of African heritage.

Almost all railwaymen continue to maintain networks of social ties outside the community, principally with those from their rural homes. Such ties which are broadly those of kinship and ethnicity both link the individual with others in the urban and rural areas and generate within the community alignments of solidarity and opposition which frequently run counter to those derived from the industrial framework. Thus any individual railwaymen may order his social world from two contrasting view-points and may have at least two sets of norms and values by reference to which he may conduct his relationships with others. How and why he operates in such a system form the principal problems of this monograph. (p. 1)

After the first two chapters dealing with the general background and specific context of the study, Grillo argues in the third chapter that increasing labor force stability and growing commitment to an urban, industrial way of life has not been accompanied by proletarianization (p. 5). Grillo says that the people do not form an urban proletariat severed from all connections with their rural origins (p. 1), limiting himself to an analysis of man living in two worlds.

A description of railwaymen living in the Nsambya Estate is very convincing in showing us how their way of living is urbanized on the one hand and on the other how ties are retained, both social and economic, to home areas. The average length of service of nearly thirteen years and a commitment to EARH when workers enter the labor market (pp. 38-39) is in sharp contrast to the ideas of "traditional" migrant workers who are supposed as typical of the African labor force. Yet, as Grillo says, "they are by no means 'de-ruralised'" (p. 44). They maintain links with home areas through continued visits, investments on housing and remittance. Nearly 41 per cent of the workers Grillo studied retain and actually cultivate land at home (pp. 47-48). The fulfillment of social obligations is equally important as the economic contribution is in maintaining links with the area they are from. Inter-ethnic marriage is an exception.

It often happens that what is news to some is common knowledge among others. With the strong hold of the kinship network in Africa, few dare to break from it. In any case, marriage is costly, it is not a personal matter in the African context: it is something which lies in the province of the entire family. The degree of urbanization in East Africa is still very low, less than 10 per cent of the total population, and the urban population is made up of different ethnic groups. For the individual urban resident, more relatives and friends are in rural than in urban areas.

Chain migration is mentioned as an important factor helping to form ethnic bound-

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someone, and hope that he does something with it. As a result you find... masses and masses of volumes of bound copies of reports, i.e. research findings, feasibility studies, social programmes and research papers. All of these pile up dust and are not very useful to anyone. This occurs because of the failure to consider research as a means of facilitating, not only what has been referred to as policy making but, the evolution of thought in society" (pp. 179-80).

aries and clusters in urban neighborhoods and industry (p. 61). Nothing is strange in a young person from the rural areas relying first on relatives and friends in the search for a job in the urban areas. Particularly this must be more important in the multi-ethnic urban areas. Even urbanized European immigrants to the United States formed communities in large cities like New York where all spoke the same language, such as Italian or Polish.

Grillo argues that the reason railwaymen tend to stay at work is attributable to the demands for a continuous supply of cash but not a sum of target incomes as such. He points out that most railwaymen came from relatively poorer areas in Kenya and Uganda. EARH in the East African context is the largest modern institution generating regular employment at relatively higher wages and salaries (p. 62). In this respect, it can be argued that the demand for a constant and continuous supply of cash from stable employment opportunities may not be limited to railwaymen. It must be equally and commonly desired by all the industrial workers and rural peasants in Uganda and Kenya. Most of the African population in East Africa no longer lives on an isolated subsistence economy, and many other wage workers in Kampara have come from poor areas. Why then do railwaymen stay at work for such a remarkably long time?

I am inclined to consider labor policy of the EARH as a crucial factors contributing to maintain a stabilized labor force. The fringe benefits like housing accommodations at the estate should have played a significant role in stabilizing the labor force. One of the serious problems for urban life is the slum conditions in predominantly African areas, and many industrial workers cannot obtain the houses to which they can bring their families. In addition, once a worker gets a house in the urban area, his house functions as a foothold and bridgehead for chain migration of kinsmen. In fact, Grillo pointed out the fact that "a large proportion of households consists of families, usually with a number of temporary guests" (p. 43). Considering reciprocity and redistribution as major operating principles of social life in the African tradition, the relatively better housing conditions at EARH estates must function to keep the workers at work.

Grillo does not touch upon the structure of agrarian society to which the railwaymen are native. Proletarianization in the history of the United Kingdom has deep roots in the agrarian structure caused by the enclosure. "In village after village, enclosure destroyed to scratch-as-scratch-can subsistence economy of the poor."<sup>3</sup> In East Africa, however, peasant farming remains the base of economy and society.<sup>4</sup> No matter how a railwayman keeps his commitment to EARH, it lasts not more than a generation, and his relatives and friends, and the network of kinship relations as a whole still exist within the rural areas, making their living on peasant farming. As Grillo mentions, "a break with the rural areas is tantamount to a break with kin and ethnic ties, an act which may have both long-term economic consequences and immediately adverse results in both the rural areas and the town" (p. 63).

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965), p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> It should be pointed out that as recent as the 1950s the characteristics of the Japanese industrial workers was explained in terms of a rural-urban continuum based on the small-scale farming system. Railway workers in Japan are those who maintained this rural-urban continuum to the greatest extent.

Accepting the rural-urban continuum based on ethnic origin, it follows that industrial relations between EARH and the railwaymen, and among the railwaymen themselves would be affected by the ethnicity complex. Grillo offers us an illuminating illustration on this point. Operating a railway requires a highly sophisticated institutional set-up accompanied by differentiation and stratification according to specific job content and tasks peculiar to the jobs. The industrial hierarchy must cut across ethnic groupings (p. 74).

Grillo points out that not only stratification of the labor force at work but outside of the work place plays a crucial role in creating solidarity and opposition among the railwaymen. In this regard, he explains the importance of "cliques," groups of mutually selected close associates and friends, in the work place (pp. 104-8). Grillo found that the composition of a clique is largely determined by status due to occupation, grade, education, and income, and that ethnicity is a less important factor in determining the clique's informal membership. The clique becomes a decision-making unit with the strategy and tactics of social interaction—either of the group as a whole or of individual members, and it becomes an informal mechanism through which social control operates in the urban areas (pp. 105-6). Cliques are usually found in subsection levels where all workers are by and large homogeneous in status, grade, and income. Jobs and tasks must be carried by groups in the subsection, and this naturally leads members towards solidarity. The solidarity may well be manifest in nonwork areas as workers dropping into a "pub" after work as British coal miners or American auto-workers used to do.

Relationships between high and low status persons are explained in terms of sense of "respect." Nobody would heartily respect an arrogant boss who prates about his position to subordinates. Everyone likes a supervisor who stands his subordinates drinks.

Respect goes to those high-status people who do not impose their superiority in relationships and who will fulfill what might be thought of as their patronal obligations. It is the content of their transactions with those of lower status, particularly from their own ethnic group and especially from their home locations and sub-locations. (p. 115)

Considering the rural-urban continuum among railwaymen, a good reputation in the town means augmenting one's reputation in the rural areas.

Everyone wants to be promoted but opportunities are limited. Social mobility on the "promotion ladder" of the EARH hierarchical industrial system is discussed in detail, and Grillo presents many interesting examples of how mobility works in creating solidarity and opposition among railwaymen. As in other modern institutions in Africa, EARH has rapidly implemented an Africanization policy (pp. 131-33). This resulted in the reduction of rapid promotion opportunities enjoyed by those with longer service to EARH. This is a source of conflict since newly recruited employees may have a higher educational background than those who took advantage of Africanization. A strong demand for overseas training opportunity exists among EARH workers, and many tactics were tried to obtain the limited number of openings; relying on political influence or enlisting in union jobs (pp. 130-32).

The sense of "relative deprivation" among those who failed in promotion, and responses toward successful fellow workers, explain the difficult human relationships among the residents of the estate and the railwaymen's community as a whole (pp. 133-46). Promotion necessitates a realignment in the new post and status (p. 146). In the estate differentiation by status and income is visible in the types of houses allocated and the mode of living (pp. 96-101). Grillo writes,

By increasing or rather heightening the range of grades and occupations available to Africans, by widening the ranges of income in the population, it has created or at least intensified differences of status. By placing Africans in positions of power and authority over other Africans it has potentially divided the community in two classes who have differences of interest and allegiance which (also potentially) are in conflict. The immediate consequences of this have so far been small scale. In the long term the significance of this could be profound. (p. 146)

Grillo extends his analysis to "urban associations and competition for status." As he points out, the African urban population tends to belong to various urban associations: ethnic associations like the Luo Union, churches, railway clubs, sports clubs, and labor unions. At the lowest level of organizational structure in the ethnic association is the "clan or lineage or sublocation associations (which) concern themselves almost exclusively with the moral and physical welfare of their members" (p. 150). In this regard, it may happen that solidarity based on clique membership in the work place is a potential source of conflicts to membership in the ethnic association. Grillo carefully examines this point, and concludes that "ethnic ties and ethnic themes" and "sectional ties" are equally significant in the union power contest (p. 174). He argues that "political contests in the union involve competitors in building up support using whatever relationships their social networks offer. . . . Those who succeed in establishing themselves in some sectional or ethnic constituency may then come to terms with each other to form coalitions" (p. 174).

In his conclusion, Grillo makes an important judgment. According to him, "for most employees urban residence is temporary in that when they retire from their working life they plan to return to their homes in the rural areas. It is partly in preparation for this retirement that they maintain their networks of rural links, fulfilling important obligations, exchanging services, transferring wealth and so on" (p. 177). It is this argument which gives me cause to have reservation about Grillo's study. How can the railwaymen retire to their rural areas? They come from poor rural areas in Kenya and Uganda and want to go back to those places when they retire. This is because unlike the British proletariat, the African railwaymen come from small-scale peasant communities. In other words, without the agrarian structure prevailing in East Africa, they are unable to even dream of retiring in the rural areas. Second, the expansion of status differentiation may have a significant impact on the rural community since rural families with kinsmen in EARH are the lucky few in their communities: not all rural families can receive remittance or social benefits which kinsmen of the railwaymen enjoy. This fact may help to widen the status and income gaps among rural families.

How does the pattern of "modern" migration which the railwaymen demonstrate hold for other urban industrial workers? This is certainly beyond the scope of Grillo's

analysis. In his analysis, therefore, some crucial questions are omitted: the comparison of employment conditions of the railwaymen, including relative levels of incomes compared to the rest of industrial workers in the town, and differences of housing accommodation between railwaymen and the rest of urban workers. It is interesting to note that the number of African employees of EARH steadily declined from 56,295 persons in 1955 to 39,171 persons in 1965 (p. 20), while in East Africa the urban population grew at explosive rates during the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in the mounting employment problems. "Attempts to stabilise the labour force in Kenya's modern urban sector—largely by paying higher wages than those available in agriculture—have...succeeded only too well."<sup>5</sup> The wage and employment conditions of EARH should have influenced the relatively longer commitment of railwaymen. Solidarity and opposition by railwaymen should have been profoundly influenced by general labor market conditions.

In conclusion, I would like to urge the author to widen his analytical framework so that this remarkable study of the African labor force will provide constructive policy suggestions for economic and social development in the East African countries. I regret that this mass of information and penetrating analysis ended with methodological suggestions referring to "conceptual problems" and "wider comparisons."

(Ichirō Inukai)

*Plan Implementation in Nigeria: 1962–1966* by Edwin Dean, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1972, xx+294 pp.

## I

Two years after independence, Nigeria launched the 1962–68 Development Plan, its first integrated, coherent development plan. The plan was not able to run its hoped for six year course owing to the 1966 political upheaval and subsequent civil war. Dean's concern here is to evaluate the plan's implementation, particularly during its first four years, 1962–66.

On the whole, Dean has done an excellent job collecting and dexterously analyzing a mass of complex materials and data. His analysis of factors impinging on plan implementation is thorough. He discusses implementation at both macro and micro levels and evaluates, in the light of stated objectives, the choice of projects and expenditure pattern.

## II

Chapter 1 is a brief discussion of the economic and political situation when the plan was drawn up. Economic planning before 1962 is also briefly analyzed.

Chapter 2 of the book highlights the institutional framework, the fiscal arrangement between federal and regional governments. The deficiencies of the planning mechanism

<sup>5</sup> S. B. L. Nigam and W. H. Singer, "Labour Turnover and Employment: Some Evidence from Kenya," in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 110, No. 6 (December 1974), p. 1.