

OBITUARY

Anthony Hamilton Millard Kirk-Greene (1925-2018)

Anthony Kirk-Greene was born in Tunbridge Wells, educated at Rugby and served as a Captain in the Indian Army from 1943 to 1947. Sadly, his Africanist friends know little about this period of his life. Returning to the UK, he graduated from Cambridge, where he was a keen hockey player, then joined the Colonial Service and discovered Nigeria, rising to the rank of Senior District Commissioner. He remained in Nigeria after independence, training his administrative successors, as a Senior Lecturer at Ahmadu Bello University. He was a fine linguist and soon mastered Hausa.

In 1967 he came to St. Antony's Oxford, his congenial academic home for the rest of his life. He married Helen (who had never experienced Africa) and together they created a home in Davenant Road, a place of welcome and hospitality for visiting students and their families, and especially Africans and Africanists. I have a vivid memory of visiting one day when Tony, then in his late eighties, treated me to reminiscences and references to support my own work on the Colonial Service and Helen plied me with very good chocolate cake. They both confessed to a surprising addiction to *Coronation Street*.

Tony was a teacher and scholar, with over 30 books and many articles to his credit. His bestseller, written with C.H. Kraft was *Teach Yourself Hausa* (1973). It is hard to know what to single out. My own favourites have to be *Symbol of Authority: The British District Officer in Africa* (2006), a socio-historical study of District Officers in Africa between 1932 and 1966, which draws heavily on published and unpublished memoirs, and articles in the *Overseas Pensioner*, featuring inter alia the District Officer in the novel, poetry written by colonial officers and a study of their second careers. To Tony I also owe my introduction to both Sanders of the River and the redoubtable Margery Perham.

He played a full part in the life of his college and in African Studies in and beyond Oxford. One of his most important legacies was the Colonial Records Project at Rhodes House and its successor, the Development Records Project.¹ He was active in OSPA (the Overseas Service Pensioners' Association) and a keen supporter of the OSPA Research Project based at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. The relationship between former colonial officers and academics was often uneasy, characterised by mutual suspicion. Tony was, perhaps uniquely, respected and honoured by both sides. To the former he was one of their own, who knew the challenges and pressures on colonial administration from inside. The academics recognised the depth and integrity of his scholarship.

He was a friend and supporter of the Royal Commonwealth Society Library in London's Northumberland Avenue (just across the road from the Nigerian High Commission) serving on its Library Committee for many years. When the Library was transferred from London to Cambridge he sent a succession of students from Oxford to the other place to consult it and kept up a delightful and informative correspondence (always handwritten but well worth the effort needed to decipher) and personal friendship with its librarian.

He was president of the African Studies Association of the UK from 1988 to 1990 and received its Distinguished Africanist Award in 2005. He was a Vice-President of the Royal African Society. From 1998 to 2004 he was a much valued advisory editor for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography on twentieth century African and colonial subjects, with a particular focus on colonial administrators. He wrote 18 entries himself, including a substantial piece on Lord Lugard. Tony was awarded the MBE in 1963 and CMG in 2001. Tony was a long serving member of the Scolma committee, which profited from his wit and wisdom, his generous spirit and his extensive networks and then an honorary member. He was a loyal reader of *ARD* and contributed a number of articles and book reviews.

It is a pleasure to record that his extensive book collection now forms the core of a research library housed in the Emir's Palace, Kano and under the management of Bayero University, Kano.²

Tony will be remembered as a great scholar and gentleman, ever generous with his time, his knowledge and his friendship. He was almost the last of his generation of Africanist scholars and will be much missed.

A booklet produced by the African Studies Centre, Oxford and St. Anthony's College for a Memorial Gathering on 22 November 2018 is available online.³ It contains some splendid photographs as well as tributes by Muhammed Sanusi II, Emir of Kano, Professor William Beinart, James Currey, Gambo Dori and Andrew Whitehead.

Terry Barringer

Notes

¹ See Patricia M. Pugh, 'The Oxford Colonial Records Project and the Oxford Development Records Project', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 6(2), pp. 76-86, 1978.

² See [insidearewa.com.ng/2018/02/04/see-what-happened-to-a-man-after-visiting-emir-sanusis-library-in-kano-state/](https://www.insidearewa.com.ng/2018/02/04/see-what-happened-to-a-man-after-visiting-emir-sanusis-library-in-kano-state/) (Accessed 17/12/18)

³ <https://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/%3A%3Aognode-325176%3A%3A/files/akgbookletrevisedpdf> (accessed 17/12/18)