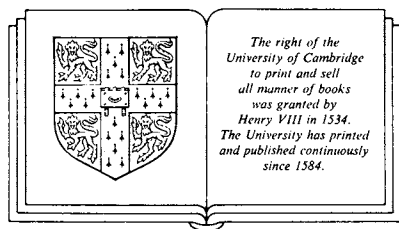


H. C. BANKOLE-BRIGHT AND POLITICS IN COLONIAL SIERRA LEONE, 1919–1958

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Introduction

When Bankole-Bright died after a long illness on 12 December 1958, ‘friends’ and political foes alike praised him as a nationalist. Sir Milton Margai, the Prime Minister, observed in his tribute that:

the death of Honourable Dr H. C. Bankole-Bright can best be described as the end of an epoch. For the grand old gentleman of politics was a stalwart pioneer in a field which held very little rewards. But as God would have it, he achieved in his life time some of the things for which he worked very hard. His contributions to West African journalism, to the political consciousness and activity of Sierra Leone, to the general cause of freedom and justice are too numerous to mention. We will remember him for all these and for his part in helping Sierra Leone gain its present constitution.

I have many memories of the late Dr H. C. Bankole-Bright but I remember him most of all for his wit, his lively debates and his ability to put his point across very effectively during his leadership of the official opposition of the last government ... death will not easily silence the achievement of a man who did so much for his country and people. History and those who write history, will make spacious room to record the life and achievements of the late Honourable Dr H. C. Bankole-Bright.¹

Sir Milton’s speech is an appropriate reference point to put Bankole-Bright in the perspective of Sierra Leone history. But perhaps Bright’s biography may not have much meaning by itself, the impact and relevance appropriate to the intriguing historiography of Sierra Leone, if it is not studied in conjunction with an analysis of politics between 1919 and 1958, especially with regard to the position and performance of his people, the Krios, under the colonial regime. In short, the life and times of Bankole-Bright cannot be divorced from the politics of Sierra Leone in the period under review. The structure and content of the chapters reflect this approach – hence the title of this work.

Furthermore, the study brings to mind Miles F. Shore’s prescriptions for a

biography which recognizes that every human being, however ordinary or extraordinary, has certain basic needs for love and self-esteem from others,

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must struggle with hatred and self-centredness which interfere with essential relationships, has had parents of a certain type and a life story marked by good and bad luck, by painful and rewarding experiences, and has unconscious residues from psychological development which influence behaviour.²

The basic points indicated here were reflected in Bright's life history.