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OBITUARIES

GEORGE CLEMENT BOND, 1936–2014

George Bond, who died on 4 May 2014, was a distinguished anthropologist of Central Africa and sat on the Council of the International African Institute (1995–2010), serving as its chairman from 1996 to 1999. He was born into the African-American intellectual elite. On his father's side, his grandfather was a freed slave who went to Berea College, while his grandmother attended Oberlin; his maternal grandfather was a bishop in the AMEZ (African Methodist Episcopal Zion) Church. Two of his uncles were presidents of black colleges in the US, and his father, J. Max Bond Sr., was a notable educator who went from Tuskegee University to work for USAID, which took him to postings around the world. George spent periods of his childhood in Haiti, Liberia (where his father was the founding president of the University of Liberia) and Afghanistan. In 1959 he graduated in sociology from Boston University, then almost the only centre of African studies in the United States, where his mentor was Elizabeth Colson. After spending ten months in 1961 doing fieldwork in Sierra Leone, he enrolled for postgraduate study in anthropology at the London School of Economics, under the supervision of Lucy Mair. It was in London that he met his wife Alison, with whom he was to have two sons and two daughters.

Bond's two years of fieldwork (1963–65) took him to Uyombe, a remote chiefdom on Zambia's border with Malawi. He found a deep and unexpected link with elders who as students had met James Aggrey when he visited Livingstonia in 1924 as a member of the Phelps Stokes Commission and gave his famous 'Africa for the Africans' speech; Bond had first learned of the speech from his grandfather, who had worked with Aggrey at Livingstone College, North Carolina. The monograph based on his PhD, *The Politics of Change in a Zambian Community* (Chicago, 1976), was a classic study of local-level politics. In a relatively small compass, it gives a masterly analysis of the complex interplay of the spheres of national and local politics, of the relations between old and new elites, of politics and class, and of the material and symbolic constituents of power, and (like all his work) it is acutely sensitive to the historicity of the phenomena. Here, his fieldwork was well timed, since it straddled Zambia's move to political independence. His theoretical bearings were eclectic but tilted strongly towards the British: the Manchester social anthropologists who then dominated the study of Central Africa, as well as Marxist social historians such as E. J. Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson. He returned to Uyombe many times over the next four decades, and (although he regarded inequality as his most enduring concern) what strikes one about the many articles he published is the very wide range of his interests: migration, education, local constructions of history, ideology and domination, property, but perhaps above all the whole span of local religion, ranging from the ancestral cult through mission Christianity to the Lumpa Church of Alice Lenshina, which had a strong following in Uyombe. It is a

matter of enormous regret that Bond never published the second monograph, dealing with religion, that he contemplated.

In 1968 Bond joined the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University as an assistant professor, moving from there in 1974 to its Teachers College, where he remained until his death. In 2001 he was appointed William F. Russell Professor of Anthropology and Education. Over the years he edited or co-edited several volumes or special issues of journals, particularly perhaps *African Christianity: patterns of religious continuity* (1979, with Walton Johnson and Sheila Walker), *Social Construction of the Past: representation as power* (1994, with Angela Gilliam), *AIDS in Africa and the Caribbean* (1997, arising in large measure from research conducted in conjunction with Joan Vincent in Uganda), and *Witchcraft Dialogues: anthropological and philosophical exchanges* (2001, with Diane Ceikawy).

Imbued with a strong sense of academic collegiality and public service, he gave much to both Columbia – where he was the Chair of African Studies for eleven years and latterly of the Department of International and Transcultural Studies at Teachers College – and to the world of African studies in the US and beyond. It was after his last visit to Zambia in 2002 that he was struck by an ill-understood neuropathy that brought him continuous pain for the rest of his days.

His many friends were often struck by the paradox that someone who was so intensely aware of his African-American heritage, and of the intellectual and political responsibilities it laid upon him, had so much the personal style of a courtly English gentleman. Much loved by his students, he continued teaching up to a few weeks before his death.

J. D. Y. PEEL