

decolonization, as well as world historians. Those studying International Relations or economic development will find much of interest in Harris' study of policy limitations and successes as well.

doi:10.1017/S0165115316000784

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Luise White. *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 343 pp. ISBN: 9780226235196. \$30.00.

In 2003 Luise White, a Professor of History at the University of Florida, published a book exploring different views of the assassination of the Rhodesian nationalist Herbert Chitepo in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1975. Having maintained her interest in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, White now gives us a more substantial and well-researched book covering the 1960s and 1970s. Before she reaches the years of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, from 1965 to the birth of Zimbabwe in 1980, she has chapters on the 1957 franchise commission and its proposals and on the 1961 constitution and African reactions to it. Her book is mainly concerned with political and social aspects of the history of the white minority regime and how in the late 1970s Rhodesia became Zimbabwe.

Wishing to present a new perspective on this story, and to complicate what she sees as a grand narrative, White sets out to counter a historiography that sees a linear transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. To some extent her book does provide a balance to some (not all) recent writing on Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s by introducing new material, not only on constitutional issues but also on, say, what being "Rhodesian" meant and on the significance of race and "whiteness". She has some fascinating pages on the ways in which the Rhodesian regime sought to get round the sanctions that were imposed on it. She shows how, contrary to the way it is often presented in the literature, the ruling Rhodesian Front was often fractious and divided. She is of course right to point out that the idea of one person one vote did not arrive suddenly at the conference held at Lancaster House in London in late 1979 that prepared the way for the transition to independence.

Her account is necessarily selective, but oddly so. Having explored in detail the background to the Pearce Commission and the reasons why its proposals were rejected, she jumps to the Geneva conference of 1976, the Anglo-American proposals of 1977 and the internal settlement. She does not explore how Henry Kissinger and John Vorster put pressure on Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Prime Minister, to concede the principle of majority rule and she gives little attention to the South African role in general, whether diplomatic or in providing police (important articles by Sue Onslow are noticeably missing from her Bibliography). She also says relatively little about the war itself, so critical to the last decade of her story. While her chapter on conscription and the impact it had on families, a chapter partly based on works of fiction, is novel and interesting, her justification for downplaying the war, that "it was not always central to the internal politics of Rhodesia" (16), is, in my view, unconvincing. Here and elsewhere her narrative, lively but often complex and dense, is sometimes idiosyncratic (what is one to make of a statement such as "The history of Zimbabwe is Rhodesia" (311), to take but one example among many?).

It is especially disappointing that *Unpopular Sovereignty* does not, as its sub-title might lead one to expect, do more to set UDI in the context of African decolonization in general. White does not even contrast the Rhodesian case with the interlinked story of the decolonization of

Namibia. In the late 1970s leading policy-makers in the West expected Namibia to become independent at roughly the same time as Zimbabwe, though in the event Namibia's independence only followed a decade later. The regional context, including the impact on Rhodesia of the independence of Mozambique, is largely missing from White's account. Wondering how things might have been different, she plays with the idea of "Rhonesia", the name a white Rhodesian suggested for an independent Central African Federation in 1961 after Britain had led its major West African colonies to independence, but she has to concede that "Rhonesia" vanished without a trace.

Not a book for non-specialists, *Unpopular Sovereignty* includes much of value, drawing as it does a lot of original research. But there are also many highly questionable assertions and claims. Few, if any, specialists on Zimbabwe are likely to agree entirely with White's account of how the negotiations at Lancaster House played out in the last months of 1979 or, say, with her suggestion that in the last days of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe the army took over the state. I doubt that anyone will ever make the details of constitutional proposals that went nowhere more interesting, but readers are likely to remain puzzled about the significance of much of what she writes about. Her book ends with little more than a series of rhetorical questions, without an attempt to show how and to what extent, the culture and institutions of the UDI years do still influence contemporary Zimbabwe, as she claims they do. White's scholarly provocations are likely to remain controversial. It is to be hoped that they will stimulate ongoing debate.

doi:10.1017/S0165115316000796

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## ASIA & THE PACIFIC

Rajeev Kinra. *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015. 394 pp. ISBN: 9780520286467. \$34.95.

Chandar Bhan Brahman belongs, alongside his fellow state secretaries Samuel Pepys, Jean-Baptiste Colbert and François-Paul de Lisola, among the great literary-bureaucratic figures of the early modern period. Yet one could be forgiven for failing to recognize Chandar Bhan, a Hindu *munshi* or state secretary serving in the upper echelons of Mughal bureaucracy in the seventeenth century. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* contains a single, and passing reference to Chandar Bhan. An entry on "Islamic Arts" positions him as a prose-writing Hindu associate of Dara Shukoh, the Mughal prince accused of apostasy and executed on the orders of his brother and the emperor, the much vilified Aurangzeb. Historians of the English East India Company and British expansionism in India are likely to have encountered extracts from Chandar Bhan's writings in Francis Gladwin's compendium *The Persian Moonshee*. A widely circulated text among British administrators in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, *The Persian Moonshee* does not, however, name Chandar Bhan as a source. Kinra's close textual analysis of the cultural and intellectual worlds occupied and produced by Chandar Bhan is thus much more than an effort to expand the still fledgling field of Mughal cultural studies. It is an act of recovery and exercise in postcolonial scholarship. Kinra peels back layers of accumulated memory and myth to question the identification