

century (and by extension in other times and places) was by no means a linear process, driven exclusively by the interests of global capitalism. Instead, this story of gin illustrates how the development of markets occurred as a kind of negotiation among producers, distributors, and consumers, and in particular how local understandings of goods shaped their place in the regional economy, complicating terms like *local* and *authentic*.

As the anti-alcohol movement forced virtual prohibition, the quantities of gin imported declined sharply; after 1920 schnapps became almost exclusively a ritual liquid. A drink that in the late nineteenth century had been associated with the modern Atlantic economy became the province of “traditional” men. Drawing on distillery records, as well as British and West African archives, court records, and oral sources, van den Bersselaar shows the interplay of consumers and commercial interests in defining and redefining a commodity demonized by temperance advocates as a “vile substance” but defended by others for its spiritual and medical powers. The distilleries struggled to distinguish their various brands, but they did not entirely grasp the degree to which their products had been captured by consumers. Following the Second World War, several of the companies attempted to expand sales by repositioning schnapps as a drink for the rising class of affluent West Africans; yet this advertising campaign failed entirely to reach a public that saw Dutch gin exclusively as a “traditional” drink—precisely the niche it continues to occupy today.

This book is both provocative and subversive. The evidence that van den Bersselaar provides for his central argument—that “imported goods are likely to be incorporated into African consumptive patterns in ways that make sense in the context of existing yet continually changing African world views, rather than according to the intended uses of the foreign producers” (150)—has important implications not only for our understanding of modern West African history but for broader scholarship on consumption and commodities as well. Better yet, it’s a pleasure to read.

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Jeremy Rich. *A Workman Is Worthy of His Meat: Food and Colonialism in the Gabon Estuary*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. France Overseas: Studies in Empire and Decolonization series. xx + 220 pp. Map. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00. Cloth.

As Jeremy Rich states in his introduction, he is not interested in “food preparation nor eating as a means of exploring cultural logics or constructions of gender” (xvii), but rather in the evolution of changing food consumption and supply patterns in colonial Libreville. The reason seems obvious: “the fact that food is so rarely mentioned in urban histories of Africa means

that scholars have missed out on a central concern of townspeople as consumers, farmers, traders, employers and fishermen" (21). Obviously if city markets and food trade networks have been for decades a central concern in precolonial history, anthropology, or geography, feeding the colonial cities is an issue not yet adequately addressed by historians. Jeremy Rich's book is thus welcome in providing a detailed case study of interdependent food relationships among Libreville, its immediate surroundings (the estuary), and the French empire. The period 1840–1960 is well covered by a large range of official and missionary sources from Gabon, France, and the United States, complemented by a few interviews collected in Libreville.

Throughout the seven chapters of the book there is a strong emphasis on food shortage and the constant difficulties faced by colonial officials in supplying foodstuffs for Libreville. The neglect of the Gabon hinterland by colonial administrators came long before the oil boom in the country. Colonial administration never (or very poorly) supported farmers and preferred to rely on imported French food. Chapter 4 on famine in the Gabon Estuary between 1914 and 1930 is particularly illuminating on this point. Food shortages resulted from a combination of climatic changes, consequences of the First World War, heavy impositions by the government on local labor, and the arrival in the 1920s of timber companies along with their own significant food demands. Rich suggests that probably a quarter of the population disappeared. Interestingly, townspeople reacted vigorously to such a desperate situation by boycotting shops as a means of lowering prices or by petitioning—often successfully—French deputies in order to demand the replacement of unpopular local administrators. Supplying food to Libreville was so central a business that it led to the emergence of a new generation of intermediaries (such as the first president of independent Gabon, Léon Mba).

Changing food consumption is another central issue of the book. In the mid-nineteenth century only a tiny elite had access to imported food and could adopt new European eating styles (30), while at the end of the twentieth century the ingredients of ordinary Libreville meals had a strong French flavor (1). However, the process by which changes in food consumption spread from a small minority to the majority of the population remains unclear. If the struggle of the elite to gain access to imported food is well explained, food consumption in the everyday lives of most residents is not addressed directly. For nonelites, was it cheaper to eat in town or in other areas of the estuary? What was the place of food in the emergence of a new urban sociability? Did wine become part of eating styles in Gabon, as in France? These issues are not raised, and one is forced to ask: how is it possible to study the evolution of food consumption while excluding "eating as a means of exploring cultural logics or construction of gender?" This limitation, however, does not affect the strength of the book's focus on the centrality of food in understanding colonial power relationships. Jeremy

Rich's book is an invitation to explore this fascinating issue more broadly and deeply in colonial and urban studies on Africa.

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Andrew Burton. *African Underclass: Urbanisation, Class and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam*. Eastern African Studies. Athens: Ohio University Press; Nairobi: British Institute in East Africa; Oxford: James Currey Publishers; Dar es Salaam: Mkuti wa Nyota, 2005. xviii + 301 pp. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Tables. Bibliography. Index. \$49.95. Cloth. \$26.95. Paper.

The history of Dar es Salaam is a sorely neglected topic, and Burton's scholarship is a welcome contribution to a growing body of work published in recent years by scholars well-equipped to provide insightful analyses of this dynamic and vitally positioned coastal city. Carefully mining the available colonial archival collections, Burton makes a valuable contribution to the field. *African Underclass: Urbanisation, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam* is a thorough administrative history of colonial Dar es Salaam, exploring the themes of demographic growth over the first half of the twentieth century, crime and urbanization, the construction of deviance under colonial conditions, and British attempts to control such processes.

However, despite the author's obvious mastery of archival sources, his analysis is surprisingly conservative. The exposition sticks closely to a recounting of incidents and observations recorded by colonial officials or appearing in the local press. For example, although the author has evidence of community responses to some crime figures, and of African hostility to Arab and Indian small businesses, the subject of social banditry is dealt with summarily (117). The author focuses on key categories—such as youth, migration, race, poverty, and the social dynamics underpinning an informal economy—and he traces colonial cultural phenomena—including colonial perceptions and concerns about unemployment and loitering, and colonialist categories such as “detribalized natives” and “undesirable natives.” Yet oddly, given the title, there is no discussion of Foucauldian ideas about the surveillance state, or of the discursive production and internalization of categories of the noncriminal and criminal.

The most interesting moments in the monograph come when Burton permits us to glimpse popular African experiences and perceptions; indeed, creativity and negotiation seem to float just beneath the surface of his narrative, especially in chapters 9 (“An Unwelcome Presence: African Mobility and Urban Order”) and 12 (“Purging the Town: The Removal of Undesirables, 1941–61”). Yet even with such evocative material, and with