

inheritance implied the power of the mother, and not the mother's brother, as has previously been claimed and witnessed by ethnographers of central Africa. For Saidi, marriage practices common to the matrilineal belt are evidence of women's agency. Even widow cleansing and inheritance, which may seem to work to the advantage of older men, especially mother's brothers, for Saidi represent the agency, authority, and autonomy of women. Likewise, women's involvement in the production of pottery and in agricultural activities is evidence of their agency, rather than the exploitation of their labor. Even in intimate matters of sexuality, ancient rites, such as the stretching of the labia, enhanced women's sexual pleasure, not those of men.

By providing a plausible account of the emergence and evolution of activities, practices, and rituals central to the lives of women over the *longue durée*, Saidi has made a valuable contribution to central African historiography. A few experts will disagree with her controversial interpretation of the evidence. Closer to the twentieth century, as the density of documentary sources and of oral traditions increases (largely unexamined by Saidi), the case for autonomous and powerful matriarchal institutions becomes less convincing. There may be historical reasons for the apparent lack of power of women after the seventeenth century: the intrusion of Luba political institutions as discussed by Saidi, or other elements linked to political economy, which are not discussed in sufficient detail, such as the arrival of cassava and the slave and ivory trades. It may be the case that prior to these transformations, matrifocal groups and ideals exerted significant social and political power. The vagueness of the historical sources in addition to the cultural relativity of notions of women's power makes it unlikely that we will ever be certain.

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Daniel Branch. *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War and Decolonization*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. African Studies Series. xxii + 250 pp. Map. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$80.00. Cloth. \$24.99 Paper.

Like other revolutionary movements, the Mau Mau peasant revolt continues to fascinate and even frustrate scholars. There has always been the drive to arrive at the "ultimate explanation" for the revolt. Its enduring appeal, which has in recent years extended beyond scholarly scrutiny to politics, rests on its unwieldy character; its decentralized organization before, during, and after the revolt; the agonizing impossibility of accurately determining its membership, ideological underpinnings, and the extent of British

brutality in the execution of the war and the role of Home Guards in this repression; the existence of several centers vying for leadership of its memory in the postcolonial period; the residual tension between the former Home Guards and the Mau Mau guerillas or their supporters and descendants in the rural areas of Central Province; the political value of Mau Mau to the Kikuyu elite in postcolonial Kenya; the complicated role of Mau Mau in the attainment of political independence (*Uhuru*) in Kenya; and finally the political and scholarly contest over the memory and position of Mau Mau in Kenya's national history.

Daniel Branch's book is a major contribution to the expanding Mau Mau historiography. The book is corrective in intent and tone. Branch seeks to draw attention to the loyalists (Home Guards), whose stories and value have hitherto been either neglected or misrepresented by the dominant nationalist thrust in the study of Mau Mau. According to Branch, many of the published books on Mau Mau have failed to account for local violence "within the communities of the Central Highlands" by inadequately considering "political economy, household relations, the cosmologies of the actors, and the demands placed on them by their living in a time of intense conflict" (3–4). Also, these books have failed to note that there were very many loyalists, not just "a few wealthy Christian individuals," and that they were motivated by very complex needs and aspirations that cannot solely, or even principally, be explained with reference to preconflict "cleavages within Kikuyu society" (4). Branch argues throughout his well-researched book that the revolt ended up as a civil war among the Kikuyu. The loyalists were not peripheral to the armed conflict, and their story is crucial to understanding Kenya's decolonization and postcolonial society and political economy.

But have loyalists hitherto been a neglected aspect of the Mau Mau revolt? On this question, Branch seems to have overstated his case. The centrality of the loyalists to the study and analysis of the Mau Mau is now generally recognized by the major scholars. Many books and articles have noted, with varying emphasis, the diversity in the origin and composition of the loyalists; variation in their motives; their brutality, opportunism, and even thuggery, which continue to be a source of tension in many villages in Central Province; the dominance of the loyalists or their descendants in Kenyatta's Kenya and the consequent marginalization of the former guerillas and their radical positions, especially on land. (See, for example, Anthony Clayton, *Counter-Insurgency in Kenya* [Transafrica, 1976]; B. A. Ogot, "Revolt of the Elders," *Politics and Nationalism in Kenya* [East African Pub. House, 1972]; Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The Myth of Mau Mau* [Meridian, 1970]; Karari Njama and Donald Barnett, *Mau Mau From Within* [Monthly Review Press, 1966]; Bruce Bermann and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley* [Ohio, 1992]; W. O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya* [Delaware, 1993]; Marshall Cough, *Mau Mau Memoirs* [Lynne Rienner, 1998]; and Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua, *The Social Context of the Mau Mau Movement*

in *Kenya, 1952–1960* [UP of America, 2006]). These publications have analyzed the many and varied origins and functions of the loyalists in the execution of the counteroffensive against Mau Mau, for as Branch states, the colonial government regarded the Home Guards as “an integral part of the military/political offensive against Mau Mau.” The same is true, to large degree, in considering the revolt as a form of “civil war.” It should be noted that this idea is not by any means unique to the Mau Mau. Almost all revolutions, at some point in their development, can be looked at as civil wars. This observation is still applicable even if the revolutionary forces, as in Mau Mau’s case, are militarily and ideologically defeated.

Still, Branch’s book is a detailed, well-written micro-analysis of the loyalists and their position in Kenya’s multilayered colonial history. It provides an opening for intense discussions on the nature of post-Mau Mau nationalism and the lingering questions about the contested memory of the revolt.

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Andrew E. Barnes. *Making Headway. The Introduction of Western Civilization in Colonial Northern Nigeria*. Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2009. Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora. xii + 330 pp. Maps. Graphs. Abbreviations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$95.00. Cloth.

The colonial history of Africa is all too often regarded as a story of how Western civilization was introduced to the continent by outsiders, rather than how Africans reacted to new influences and opportunities, adjusting them to fit their needs. Andrew Barnes turns this viewpoint around. While concentrating on the motives and actions of colonial administrators and missionaries in Northern Nigeria, he shows how their aims were increasingly reformulated by the Africans they were supposed to be ruling and guiding.

According to Barnes, Northern Nigeria appeared to the conservatively minded British administrators, mostly products of public schools, as an Arcadian utopia in which to create an ideal society under the wings of a Muslim aristocracy. Disillusioned by liberalism and working-class democracy back home, they craved an African Camelot, an idealized society of lords and subjects under their own control. Protestant missionaries shared much of this sentiment, dreaming of remaking the North as an idyll of Christian yeomen working the fields of their traditional hamlets.

What divided the two groups was the issue of religion, the administrators fearing that Christianity would undermine Muslim aristocracy while introducing the unwanted effects of egalitarianism and social mobility. Struggle over proselytizing weakened the ability of both parties to influ-