Richard Reid. *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007. Eastern African Studies series. xvi + 256 pp. Maps. Glossary & Abbreviations. Notes. Sources & Bibliography. Index. $59.95. Cloth. $24.95. Paper.

African military history has been off the agenda for some time. Interest in colonial conquest has faded along with its precolonial precursors, and studies of late colonial insurgency have generally taken a different line. One reason for this may be that military history in Africa, especially precolonial Africa, is difficult to write, except perhaps at the micro-level. There are conceptual traps and the remains of old debates to negotiate and a body of source material that is problematic. European observers' accounts may be invaluable for detail, but they are shaped by normative (and often Eurocentric) assumptions about the nature of warfare and its "proper" conduct and by condescending attitudes toward "uncivilized" peoples. Earlier historiography, too, may not always be helpful. While it did not dismiss African warfare as merely "primitive" or pointless, it did argue that rising levels of violence in much of nineteenth-century East Africa were principally the result of externally focused commercial and diplomatic impulses. War leaders, however potent locally, were still the agents of a baleful globalization. It is thus difficult to find a clear path toward a new synthesis, and Reid is to be commended for having tried, with some success, to do so—and for discussing frankly, in a stimulating introduction and throughout the text, the difficulties that he encountered. The result is an important and thoughtful overview that reminds us that African military history is worth studying in its own right, and that it illuminates much else about "state and society."

Reid takes a middle course between "formalist" and "substantivist" approaches. He deals with technology, tactics, recruitment, training, leadership, conflict resolution, and so on, but he places them in their specific, and changing, cultural context. He also deals with culture more directly in discussions of remembrance, honor, fear, and insecurity—and the impulses to and celebrations of violence. He makes war meaningful, if not always rational. While Reid inevitably deals with "war and trade" and "state-building," he does not let these themes dominate. He deals judiciously with the slaves–guns nexus—the former were a profitable by-product but rarely a primary commercial objective, while the latter were less than revolutionary but more than merely cosmetic—and he points out that while violence could build states it could equally undermine them (though he tends, on the whole, to emphasize construction rather than destruction). His discussion of strategy balances economic motivation against other considerations, and underscores the irony that war often undermined its own objectives, for trade might be destroyed by attempts to monopolize it, and areas crucial to commerce devastated by conquest.

The title, however, is misleading. As the author indicates at the start, the book concentrates on three "corridors": the Ethiopian Highlands;

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0112 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the interlacustrine region, notably Buganda; and the area south of Lake Victoria and east of Lake Tanganyika where Mirambo sought hegemony. Reid makes a good case for restricting his coverage, but his approach has drawbacks nonetheless. The detailed examples inevitably focus attention on state-directed warfare and commercial considerations. Buganda was, as Reid sees it, an expanding mercantile state; Mirambo in central Tanzania wished to create a commercial network under his control; and Ethiopian rulers were concerned with access to the Red Sea and its trade. All used war to build or consolidate state power, and in Ethiopia and Buganda at least, military power was shaped by the existence of the state. The two were inseparable. But most of East Africa's communities were not organized as states. What of non-state warfare? While Reid does acknowledge this omission, and attempts to make up for it with references to other areas, in a book which otherwise makes bold and stimulating comparisons it is an opportunity missed—particularly to address commonalities, rather than the obvious differences, between state and nonstate warfare.

Reid argues that other books can be and should be written on African warfare. One hopes that African military history will now return to the scholarly agenda—not least because of the need to trace current military traditions and tendencies back beyond the colonial period. If so, Reid's reconnaissance will be invaluable. Like John Thornton for West Africa, he has given a lead for others to follow and set a benchmark that they must heed.

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Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, eds. *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. viii + 332 pp. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Contributors. Index. $45.00. Cloth.

Historians of Africa have long recognized the significant role of African clerks and interpreters employed by the state. Because they occupied the point of contact between colonizer and colonized, and because they controlled and translated the exchange of information between them, they actually deployed colonial power. More than three decades ago, Ronald Robinson highlighted the complexities of their "bargain of collaboration" and Monica Wilson remarked on how deeply these "cultural brokers" shaped colonial relations. But in more recent times powerful tendencies to celebrate resistors—and thus to dismiss state employees as mere collaborators and assume that African employees simply enacted state intentions—prematurely closed such interpretative openings. This volume returns to

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