

HEIKE I. SCHMIDT, *Colonialism and Violence in Zimbabwe: a history of suffering*. Woodbridge: James Currey (hb £55 – 978 1 84701 051 3). 2013, xvi + 287 pp.

Heike Schmidt has produced a ‘radically local’ history of violence in the Honde Valley, which is located along eastern Zimbabwe’s border with Mozambique. Central to the book is John Lonsdale’s concept of moral ethnicity, which represents shared values based on civil virtue discussed on a daily basis. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Shona-speaking valley inhabitants developed a frontier society, defined as balancing danger and opportunity, given the arrival of Nguni raiders from the south, the division of the area between the British and Portuguese – neither of whom exercised effective control – and the arrival of refugees fleeing the suppression of rebellion in Mozambique. In the 1940s and 1950s, three groups that saw themselves as modernizing pioneers entered the valley: an African self-improvement organization called Ziwe Zano (‘Lift Yourselves Up’), which remained distinct from local society; Manyika people expelled from their original lands by the colonial state, who brought mission Christianity, literacy and peasant production while integrating into the frontier identity; and Europeans who created embryonic tea industry enclaves independent from the indigenous communities. When the Rhodesian state tried to exercise authority over the valley in the 1950s, local people resisted its agricultural regulations and tea outgrowing scheme because they threatened the frontier way of life, and not, as Schmidt points out, as part of a broader nationalist agenda.

The Honde Valley is well known as one of the most hotly contested areas of Zimbabwe’s War of Liberation during the second half of the 1970s, given the location of Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) staging areas across the border in independent Mozambique. Schmidt explains that, while the natural cover and sympathetic inhabitants of the northern part of the valley meant that insurgents turned it into a semi-liberated zone, the limited cover and presence of a military base in the south led to insurgents there coercing support from locals. The author stresses the local agendas at work during the war, as valley inhabitants used the hunt for government collaborators to settle old scores with neighbours. The important role of the valley’s women in assisting the guerrillas is emphasized, although this is not surprising since it is now well established in the literature on the conflict. A more interesting point is that valley chiefs, unlike their colleagues in other parts of the country, tended to continue their earlier resistance by helping to organize support for the insurgents. There is considerable discussion of the Rhodesian security force counterinsurgency method of herding valley inhabitants into fenced and guarded ‘protected villages’ (PVs) to reduce their contact with insurgents and to supply cheap labour to the white-owned tea estates that funded the war. Many people resisted resettlement, although, once behind the wire, they developed a shared identity. However, while some smuggled food out to insurgents, others turned the situation into a business opportunity.

During the 1980s, the first decade of Zimbabwe’s independence, the valley was again plagued by violence as some insurgents refused to surrender their guns and their newfound power, and Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) fighters crossed the border looking for supplies and retaliating against Zimbabwe for providing assistance to the Mozambique government. The author maintains that, following the end of the Mozambique civil war in 1992, the Honde Valley became a useful example of how African religious healing practices can help people deal with the legacy of violence despite the end of the area’s frontier status by an expanding and authoritarian Zimbabwe state.

But for a reflection on violence, this book is weak on warfare. Among the many anonymous informants is an alleged African Second World War veteran whose preposterous claim to have entered Berlin in 1945 as part of a South African unit is taken for granted (p. 70). This raises concerns about the veracity of other oral accounts. Also, beyond the use of PVs, counterinsurgency in the valley is not well explained. The major engagement there in November 1976, which resulted in the Rhodesian military's largest number of insurgent kills up to that point, is described inaccurately and not put in context, and there is only a brief mention of the Selous Scouts 'brainwashing' of former insurgents (p. 175). Finally, the life history approach appears unbalanced. The author interviewed and quotes former insurgents, but while the recruitment of valley men into the security forces is alluded to, their wartime experiences are ignored. Rhodesian African Rifles and Guard Force personnel are treated as anonymous figures. These flaws, as well as the overly complex language used to explain fairly simple concepts about identity and geography, may limit the readership of this book.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972014000278

KINGS M. PHIRI, JOHN McCracken, WAPULUMUKA O. MULWAFU, editors,  
*Malawi in Crisis: the 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its legacy.*  
Zomba: Kachere Books (pb £24.95 – 978 9 990887 77 8). 2012, xiv + 412 pp.

This important volume brings together both scholarly analyses and eyewitness accounts of a key event in Malawian history, the 1959–60 State of Emergency and its aftermath. The Emergency triggered the end of the Central African Federation, the rise of nationalism and the emergence of Dr Hastings Banda as the undisputed nationalist leader. In this anthology, by using the Emergency as a 'prism', the chapters explore events, practices, debates and representations surrounding it within local, national, regional and imperial frameworks.

The volume is divided into four distinct themes: local studies, colonial violence and African responses, Central African interconnections, and memories and memorials. The contributors include leading Malawianists, younger scholars and distinguished veterans of the Emergency, who together provide a diverse and rich array of perspectives and approaches to the Emergency, its repercussions, legacies and interpretations. Overall, the selected themes and chapters work well together: many fruitful connections are formed between chapters and, although there is some overlap, each contribution brings its own insights. John McCracken provides an excellent introduction to the anthology, in which he summarizes its key themes and charts potential ways forward.

The book opens with a series of local studies, all of which draw on oral testimony and tease out a richness of detail that both complements and complicates the more general picture of events and interpretations. Owen Kalinga and Kings Phiri present district-level analyses of the Emergency (of Karonga and Zomba districts respectively), while Hendrina Kachapila-Mazizwa moves the study to a village level (concentrating on Chiwaliwali village). Wapulumuka Mulwafu explores the agrarian origins of the Emergency through a study of peasant resistance to *malimidwe* or soil conservation measures in three districts in 1953. The role of Malawian women as active, previously often forgotten, agents in the Emergency is foregrounded by Annie Chiponda. Finally, Jack Thompson unpicks events and identities at the Livingstonia Mission.