their instruments of resistance. She argues that the often-discussed Women's War of 1929 was not the only uprising, but was preceded and succeeded by various protests and demonstrations, which she documents through the 1950s.

The final chapter posits that external factors had contradictory effects on the women of south-eastern Nigeria. Further, Chuku argues that these ambiguities should be understood in terms of women as active agents in challenging, negotiating and engaging with the colonial order on their own terms. This substantial volume is an important addition to colonial African gender studies.

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PIERLUIGI VALSECCHI, *I signori di Appolonia: poteri e formazione dello Stato in Africa occidentale fra xvi e xviii secolo*. Rome: Carocci (pb €19.30 – 88 430 2146 X). 2002, 345 pp.

It is a curious fact that the early history of the Gold Coast of West Africa and its connection with Europe are presented to a greater extent than normal in languages other than English. This started with Albert van Dantzig's monumental work about the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch presence on the Gold Coast (1980), published in French and never translated. Several other studies by mainly Francophone scholars followed, and now we can add Valsecchi's study in Italian. He has taken the town and state of Appolonia in the western Gold Coast as his subject and follows its history from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

Valsecchi's book is an interesting study of an area that has received relatively little attention from historians. The town and polity of Appolonia, central to the cultural and geopolitical area of Nzema, on the western border of present-day Ghana, has always been a liminal town. Its position in a relatively isolated spot on the coast, on the fringe of the Akan culture group, determined – and still determines – its history and identity. In eight chapters, Valsecchi takes us through Appolonia's history. The first two chapters discuss the (early) history and identity of the area, and the position of Appolonia in the sub-region. The next part then forms the core of this study, analysing the politics and trade of the town, its changing political and economic position after 1650, and the subsequent shifting power relations and renewed equilibrium. Special attention is given to the formation of new polities under pressure from Asante expansion and the role of 'big men' – private merchants like Jan Konny, who tried to establish their own states. A section on the eighteenth-century aftermath of these developments concludes the chronology.

Valsecchi presents us with a detailed and carefully crafted historical study of a peculiar Akan polity. He makes careful use of a variety of available sources, and shows awareness of their possibilities and limitations for the reconstruction of early African history. The footnotes list an abundance of material from the Ghanaian archives, the British National Archives (predominantly the T.70 series), as well as many references to Dutch sources and modern and earlier oral traditions and histories. It is unfortunate that Valsecchi had to rely mainly on the Furley Collection for his Dutch material. The Dutch presence at Axim after 1642 produced a large number of records that were not incorporated in the Furley Collection, and are therefore relatively hard to access. Study of these materials can provide further fine-tuning of our understanding of the relationships between the different coastal polities as seen and interpreted by the Dutch, and of the influence of the European presence on the formation and

stability of local polities over time. Valsecchi, though producing a historical discourse, is conscious of and actively uses anthropological theory and research methods to underscore his arguments. In this way he shows us the importance of kinship and personal relationships, in the form of family structures and networks, for our understanding of Akan history.

Valsecchi's study provides a good methodological framework for the study of small African polities that developed in the shadow of much larger political and economic processes. Having said that, a few reservations need to be registered. The quality of the reproduced maps, as sources central to some of Valsecchi's arguments, is very poor. This is unfortunate. Also, the fact that an index is missing makes the book less accessible than it could be. And finally, important as Valsecchi's book and the other non-English studies referred to earlier are, often covering unique historical research themes, it would be very helpful if all of them were also available in the lingua franca of Ghanaian history, namely in English.

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ROY M. DILLEY, *Islamic Knowledge and Caste Knowledge Practices among Haalpulaar'en in Senegal: between mosque and termite mound*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International Africa Institute, London (pb £19.95 – 0 7486 1990 9). 2004, 270 pp.

The academic literature on Senegal is highly compartmentalized. We have numerous studies in political science, a plethora of texts on Islam, as well as a multitude of books on social structure, economic development, literature and language. Only a few authors bridge these fields and develop new perspectives on old issues. Roy Dilley's book precisely explores this trans-disciplinary field of studies by taking up two central issues in Senegalese studies – namely Islam and the different domains of the social – with an emphasis on the different, yet related, practices and spheres of knowledge which have often been neglected in the literature. In his analysis of 'Islamic' and 'craft' domains of knowledge, Dilley integrates three disciplinary approaches – orientalist, historical and anthropological – and comes to some inspired insights on the anthropology of Muslim societies. Along the way, Dilley deconstructs a number of misleading conceptions, such as that of 'caste', a term which has been widely used for the analysis of social structures in Senegal and for the different social groups – the 'free', the members of the different craft groups and the descendants of slaves. Instead, he introduces new terms such as 'rank' and 'social category', which are better suited to express social realities than some of the ideological constructions of a 'casted society'.

Haalpulaar'en religious scholars (TooroBe) could be regarded thus as a social category (like 'fishermen', 'farmers' or 'warriors'), as well as a group which has developed notions of 'craft': not only do they stress their 'skills' (as experts of religious knowledge and practice) but they have also become, despite their heterogeneous social origins, an increasingly endogamous occupational group. In recent genealogical constructions, the historical social origins of the TooroBe, which included members of craft groups, were redefined. From the eighteenth-century jihads, when the TooroBe came to power as a social group of warrior scholars, they tried to redraw the existing boundaries between the different spheres of knowledge, to define anew what was to be regarded as illicit and to 'out-define' specific notions of knowledge as non-Islamic. At the