

## REVIEWS

### AFRICAN ARCHAEOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTORY BUT CRITICAL SYNTHESIS

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*African Archaeology: A Critical Introduction*. Edited by ANN B. STAHL. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. Pp. xiv + 490. £65 (ISBN 0-4051-0155-5); £19.99, paperback (ISBN 1-4051-0156-3).

KEY WORDS: Archaeology, teaching texts.

This attractive book consists of eighteen chapters by household names in African archaeology attached to North American, African and European institutions. It belongs to a series with twin goals: to ‘cover central areas of undergraduate archaeological teaching’ and to offer ‘more advanced researchers’ a ‘rapid introduction to contemporary issues in specific sub-fields of global archaeology’ (p. vii). The chapters fit well together. Their common target is what Stahl calls the notion of a ‘race of progressive development’ (p. 9): the idea of an evolutionary sequence, modelled on European archaeological evidence, depicting the evolution of human groups through well-defined and teleologically ordained ‘ages and stages’.

Accordingly, although ordered roughly chronologically the chapters give no sense of marking stations on a single developmental pathway. The first two chapters (Stahl, Lane) set the scene. They denounce the negative image suffered by Africa through the prevalence of inappropriate European methodological and theoretical standards. Both are lucid overviews of major debates, and go as far as is possible to suggest how archaeology, unavoidably hampered by its sparse data, can address these problems. A pertinent complement to Lane’s discussion of ‘otherness’, with reference to Montaigne whom he cites, would be to turn the tables and report African depictions of Europeans.

The great strength of the volume is its critical stance. Evidence is presented within its context, warts and all, not as ‘the final truth’. It seems every contributor might have had in mind examples of what Eggert calls ‘an undue amount of wishful thinking, circular reasoning, and largely uninspired, if not negligent, combining of concepts and data of different disciplines’ (p. 316). Throughout the book the impact of intellectual tradition and methodology on interpretations is emphasized. Some examples can be cited. Plummer (Chapter 3) and Deacon and Wurz (Chapter 5) show how radically readings of the record left by stone tool users (Oldowan and MSA respectively) can diverge in debating cognitive modernity. Likewise Mitchell’s (Chapter 6) outline of shifts from ‘people-to-nature’ (settlement, subsistence) to ‘people-to-people’ (gender, gift exchange) questions, and Eggert’s (Chapter 12) overview of the changing fortunes of linguistically based models, will be cheering to the undergraduate wrestling with conflicting reports of the same data.

The geographic coverage is remarkable. All but three of the countries of Africa (Guinea Bissau, Gambia and Swaziland) feature in the index. Stahl opens her Introduction listing those African sites known to a typical class of undergraduates: Olduvai Gorge, Great Zimbabwe, Gorée, Jenné-jeno, plus some of the southern African hominin sites. Oddly, the book reads as a roll call of sites which would be

known to a typical conference gathering of Africanist archaeologists. In this sense the book plays it safe, staying close to the usual suspects. Admittedly models, interpretations and chapters are best based on well-studied sites. However, a critical approach to the archaeology of Africa, pushed to its logical conclusion, requires hypotheses about the vast blanks between islands of research. As a positive side effect, this would provide gentle guidance to any undergraduate moved to take further an interest in the continent.

On a related point, some contributions are weakened by omissions of relevant literature. For example, the rock art of Air includes depictions of cows being milked (Dupuy); papers in the Binder and Audouze and Beyries and Pétrequin volumes are relevant to ethnoarchaeological studies of artefacts and technologies; Azelik and Bura (Bernus and Cressier, Gado) further illustrate West Africa in the past 2,000 years.<sup>1</sup>

Particularly valuable in Stahl's volume are chapters drawing links between the African evidence and other parts of the world. Gifford-Gonzalez (Chapter 8) remarks that, much like agriculture in northern Europe, pastoralism in Africa was not inevitable; Casey (Chapter 9) associates Natufians and Holocene West Africans as practising 'alternative' (neither foraging nor farming) economies. Such integration is the best way of counteracting the marginalization of the African archaeological record, so eloquently denounced by the authors of this volume. In this light, and with the target audience in mind, it is worth singling out chapters exposing the inherent unroadworthiness of well-trodden concepts, such as the 'Neolithic revolution' (Casey, Chapter 9); the definition of urbanism through attribute-lists (Fleisher and LaViolette, Chapter 13); and expressions of ethnic identity through pottery (Kusimba and Kusimba, Chapter 16). The lucid exposition of these long-standing and thorny debates should prove a sure way to undergraduates' hearts, whatever their creed.

In summary, *African Archaeology: A Critical Introduction* is a success. It does exactly what its name suggests: leading students by example in evaluating evidence, and dismissing long-held misperceptions about the African past.

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## SYNTHESIS OF BENIN HISTORY

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*A Popular History of Benin*. By PETER M. ROESE and DMITRI M. BONDARENKO.

Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003. Pp. 391. £33/\$55.95, paperback (ISBN 0-8204-6079-6).

KEY WORDS: Precolonial, Nigeria, teaching texts.

<sup>1</sup> C. Dupuy, 'Évolution iconographique de trois stations de gravures rupestres de l'Air méridional (Niger)', *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines*, 24, 2 (1988), 303–15; S. Bernus and P. Cressier, *La région d'In Gall – Teggida n Tesemt (Niger) – programme archéologique d'urgence, 1977–1981* (Niamey, 1991); S. Beyries and P. Pétrequin (eds.), *Ethnoarchaeology and its Transfers* (Oxford, 2005); D. Binder and F. Audouze (eds.), *Terre cuite et société: la céramique, document technique, économique, culturel* (Juan les Pins, 1994); B. Gado, 'Un "village des morts" à Bura en République du Niger: un site méthodiquement fouillé fournit d'irremplaçables informations', in *Vallées du Niger: Catalogue d'exposition* (Paris, 1993), 365–74.

The title of this book reveals the authors' main purpose, to create a popular history of Benin. The goal is obvious in the style, which includes a sort of travelogue of prominent Benin sites, asides on the life of the region today, personal recollections of the authors and some occasional research anecdotes. It is also reflected in the decision not to include any academic apparatus in the form of foot or end notes, although the book does have a very extensive bibliography. Unfortunately, the book does not have a sufficiently engaging style to be a truly popular history, since it seems too much directed to a non-African audience to be fully accepted in Benin itself, and it is ultimately too academic for a public audience as well. Finally, Lang has published it at a price that is likely to deter the casual reader in Africa or elsewhere. As a result, the attempts at a popular style, both the asides and the lack of an apparatus, detract from the academic element, creating a problematic work, which will probably not achieve its popular objective, and weaken its scholarly contribution.

It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss the book for these faults. Both authors are serious scholars with long experience in the field of Benin studies and have drawn on a wealth of research including oral tradition, archaeology and written documentation. They have good treatments of the anthropology of the Edo and are quite competent in the use of art history as well. Their work includes some original ideas and reconstructions, especially concerning the early history of the kingdom, much of which has appeared in more fragmentary but better documented form in their various articles. There is, however, no synthesis of their body of work as comprehensive as the one presented here. Their knowledge of local archaeology (some of it inevitably unpublished), oral traditions concerning various sites and non-royal traditions creates a well-informed approach to Benin history.

Both scholars have written most extensively about the earlier periods of history, and their discussion of the pre-1500 period is the strongest part of the book, once they get past the account of local traditions about the kingdom's more remote origins in Egypt. They manage to take the corpus of Benin oral tradition seriously without simply reproducing Jacob Egharevba's canonical account.<sup>1</sup> They examine earlier collections of royal tradition, variant traditions (since Egharevba sometimes omitted traditions he heard but thought might be embarrassing to his readers) and local traditions. The contribution that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century oral tradition can make to the reconstruction of events prior to the sixteenth century can certainly be a matter for serious debate, but to the degree that marrying the traditions (especially local ones) to archaeology can produce an acceptable history of such an early period, they have succeeded.

The history of the later periods is more conventional and breaks less new ground. While still attending to oral tradition to interpret events, and continuing to use them critically, the later portion relies more heavily on European sources and on attempts to locate cross-connections between the two bodies of information. The authors have compiled a large corpus of written documents. Some of these they have consulted directly (their bibliography does not include António Brásio's *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*,<sup>2</sup> which printed most of the pre-1700 documents on Benin in Romance languages) but many, such as the records of the various Capuchin missions and the Second Dutch West India Company, they appear to have only used the material as it was presented in Alan Ryder's classic book.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jacob U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* (3rd edn., Ibadan, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> António Brásio (ed.), *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* (1st series, 15 vols., Lisbon, 1952–88; 2nd series, 7 vols., Lisbon, 1958–2004).

<sup>3</sup> A. F. C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485–1897* (New York, 1969).

Their treatment of the civil war from 1689 to 1735 is fairly cursory, given the attention it has received in other scholarly literature, and most of the discussion is a narrative reconstruction of European trade and their relations with Benin. On the other hand, the authors expand on most other treatments of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by careful use of the existing but scattered documentary material, though never fully embracing a perspective from Benin. There is more work to be done on this period.

This book will ultimately be a book for specialists, and in that guise it will prove frustrating because of its presentation. But it will also be a book that will likely remain in the corpus of specialist literature on Benin because of its comprehensive approach to the country's history and its interpretative findings.

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## HISTORICAL EXPLORATION OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION

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*The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*. Edited by SCOTT S. REESE. Leiden: Brill, 2004. Pp. xiv + 307. €95/\$136 (ISBN 90-04-13779-3).

KEY WORDS: Education, intellectual, Islam.

Most of the papers in this volume derive from a colloquium sponsored in May 2001 by Northwestern University's Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa. The studies are diverse in chronological and geographical focus but all are empirically rich and well researched. Each is indispensable reading for specialists in its field, and any would provide a useful starting point for future investigation.

Social historian David Gutelius traces the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rise and decline of the Nasiriyya brotherhood, based in the Dra' Valley of Morocco, in terms of structural changes in the constellation of relationships that bound farmers, landowners, traders, intellectuals and the government. Ghislaine Lydon examines the production of knowledge, and the role of the written word within that process, in the Western Sahara over the last millennium. Rüdiger Seesemann explores controversial legends concerning the ancestry of Ibrahim Niasse, a prominent Tijani leader in the mid-twentieth century. To French colonial authorities it seemed scandalous that a Senegalese should have Mauretanian followers; rival Tijanis, both Senegalese and Mauretanian, agreed. Muhammad S. Umar gives an historical context for the recent emergence of Nigerian Islamic academies that train women as '*ulama*'. He introduces 'Mallam Shaykha' and 'Alima Kabira', two beneficiaries of this Islamic 'education'. Significantly, despite their predictably fundamentalist views, both women are too terrified of their ostensible constituency to reveal their actual names. Stefan Reichmuth adopts the Cairene perspective of the distinguished scholar Murtada al-Zabidi (1732–91) to explore the concerns of Saharan and sub-Saharan intellectuals who came to be the master for endorsements and advice. Because al-Zabidi's guest list proves to be a virtual *Who's Who* of contemporary Sudanic Africa, the author is able to correlate the intellectual concerns of the seekers with the age's 'far-reaching cultural and communal changes' (p. 141). Albrecht Hofheinz examines the 'Fondo Kati', the oldest library of the Niger bend area known to have been collected by a single family. Its name derives from pioneer Songhai historian Mahmud Kati; in

addition to imperial family connections, the author of the *Ta'rikh al-Fattash* enjoyed perhaps unexpected Spanish ancestry.

Philip Sadgrove surveys the rise of Ibadi printing at the close of the nineteenth century, an activity often sponsored by the Zanzibari sultans both at home and in Cairo or the Levant. The surviving letters to Zanzibar of the Mzabi scholar Muhammad b. Yusuf Attafayyish cast light upon the possibilities and practical difficulties of this activity. Kai Kresse presents Shaykh Abdilahi Nassir's Ramadan lectures of 27 December 1998–17 January 1999. This Kenyan Swahili notable, a scholar, publisher and politician of wide experience and firm personal integrity, uncharacteristically opened his sessions to contemporary issues, and invited tolerant self-reflection and questioning – while calling for a 'benevolent [and presumably Islamic] dictator' (p. 237). Scott S. Reese accompanies the early twentieth-century Zanzibari intellectual Abu Harith on his travels to Egypt and the Levant. The scholar's travel account, directed toward a popular audience in East Africa, defended the virtues of the past while embracing useful modern innovations and condemning modern vices. Lorenzo Declich introduces a tradition of astrology, faith-healing and medical learning carried by Ibadi intellectuals from Oman to the court of nineteenth-century Zanzibar. There the tradition gathered new information from East African sources and diffused among local healers. R. S. O'Fahey traces the intellectual influence across the nineteenth century of Neo-Sufi leaders Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Samman and Ahmad b. Idris al-Fasi, and of Ahmad Muhammad Surkitti, as 'a kind of "pre-modernist" challenge to the local establishments' in East Africa and Southeast Asia (p. 284), which latter were Hadrami and Shafi'i.

This volume rightly stresses the importance of studying texts (Lydon, Hofheinz, Sadgrove, Declich). Valid also is its emphasis upon examination of the social context in which texts are produced (Seesemann, Umar, Kresse, Reese). The most successful studies (Reichmuth, Gutelius, O'Fahey) are those willing to subordinate both text and context to the disciplinary perspective of history. The authors struggle to forge an accurate and meaningful periodization for the historical assessment of Islam in Africa. There are pitfalls: Lydon offers a stimulating model of the utility of scholarly production in the western Sahara, but surely errs in projecting comparatively recent data back upon the remote past (compare pp. 125–6). Reichmuth's masterful synthesis of the eighteenth century will rightly stand as a chronological benchmark. In most cases, as O'Fahey correctly observes, even 'the seventeenth century is still beyond the scholarly horizon' (p. 286). Hofheinz, happily, is able to offer a welcome exception. Let the exploration continue!

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## AFRICAN RELIGIONS IN WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP

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*European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa*. Edited by FRIEDER LUDWIG and AFE ADOGAME. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004. Pp. ix + 405. €78 (ISBN 3-447-05002-0).

KEY WORDS: Historiography, religion.

The publication of J. S. Mbiti's *African Religion and Philosophy* in 1969 started a debate about the representation of the indigenous religions of Africa in the western

mode of scholarship. It was as if scholars had just discovered the field that Geoffrey Parrinder pioneered in the late 1940s. The debate took three routes: some were concerned with the content of the study and accuracy of representation, such as the debate about the high God in African religions and cultures. Others were stunned by the breadth of Mbiti's coverage and wondered how his characterization, research method and unifying hypothesis could serve. Aylward Shorter would later provide a typology in the study of African religions. Still others, such as Okot p'Bitek, lashed out against the threat of 'hellenization'. From a nationalist perspective, he attacked Mbiti for using Christian categories in representing African religions. Some thought that his humiliating experience at Oxford University launched him into a creative cultural nationalism that produced a very vibrant romantic literature. A commentator felt that African scholars heralded their coming of age in the muscular, self-critical scholarship that raged within the walls of Makerere University. This trend fuelled the analysis of how westerners have misrepresented African religions. At the University of Ibadan, E. B. Idowu gave a stirring series of lectures that was published in the late 1970s as *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. He so detailed the origins of all the epithets heaped on African religions that a reviewer alleged that Idowu was quarreling with dead men.

A genre had been born. Curtin's account of Europeans' image of Africa inspired Mobley to examine the Ghanaians' image of the missionaries, while others searched for the images of African religions in western or in African scholarship. In the 1980s, younger scholars, as Ikenga Metuh and Udobata Onunwa, joined the fray. As Ludwig and Adogame argue, trained anthropologists within this period produced reconstructive and positive images. It was clear that the reigning images had been generated by a variety of doubtful sources: shipmasters and traders, amateur colonial officers, armchair theorists, official anthropologists who were commissioned to provide data for governance and missionaries with hostile agenda. Ideologically biased lenses produced biased images. Just below the surface remained the resilient fact that the image of Africa was shaped by the political and cultural environments in Europe.

The question is why the old theme attracts attention in the twenty-first century. The editors argue that new global geopolitics have turned more eyes to the continent. They could have added that the growth of both Islam and Christianity makes Africa central in the reshaping of the global religious landscape. Africa appears like a mirage in western telescopes, appearing, disappearing and appearing again. A conference of prominent Africanists, mostly European men, discuss the latest reincarnation. The papers are arranged chronologically around six themes: African religions in western scholarship (van Rimson, Platvoet, Debusmann, Danfulani, Wamue and the editors); the study of Islam (Levtzion, Haggag and Tayob); Christian missions (Gaiya, Clements, Steed, Ward, Hastings, Schultze); careers of pioneering doyens (Berner, Ustorf, Smidt, Bidima, Stoecker, Walls, Olupona, Young, Forster); promoting institutions (Westerlund, Devisch, Papathanasiou, Cox, der Heyden) and the contemporary significance (Hock).

The importance of this book is the breadth and quality of the perspectives by a star-studded cast. For me, the most interesting and informative part of the book is the collection of commentaries on the most significant scholars who shaped the study of African religions: notably Kant, Herder, Hume Muller, Frazer, Oldham, Frobenius, Edwin Smith, J. V. Taylor, Max Warren, Evans-Pritchard, Parrinder and Victor Turner. Equally crucial are the roles of institutions that serve as *ashrams* in cultivating the study of African religions – in spite of dominant ideologies. The appendix underscores the import by providing the websites of important centers. The chapters on Islam are excellent, especially when Tayob

compares Trimingham and Lamin Sanneh in their basic assumptions. This book should be adopted as a textbook in the study of African religions. I would have preferred to have a consolidated bibliography at the end instead of one at the end of each chapter.

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## ALCOHOL IN ANGOLA AND IN THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

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*Enslaving Spirits: The Portuguese–Brazilian Alcohol Trade at Luanda and its Hinterland, c. 1550–1830.* By JOSÉ C. CURTO. Leiden: Brill, 2004. Pp. xiv + 252. €74/\$93 (ISBN 9004-13175-2).

KEY WORDS: Angola, precolonial, alcohol, slave trade.

That alcohol was a crucial commodity in the development of Atlantic commerce, and in particular in the development of the transatlantic slave trade, is hardly a novel proposition. After all, textbooks have long enshrined the notion of the triangle trade, with rum representing one edge. Certainly, images of that triangle, fixed neatly on maps of the North Atlantic, shaped my own formative ideas of the history of slave trade. Historians have subsequently demolished the concept, demonstrating that other commodities were much more significant than alcohol as elements in the complex economic transaction that drove millions of Africans to death and servitude. But if alcohol generally made up a relatively small proportion of the commodities imported into Africa, various kinds of alcoholic drinks were a ubiquitous presence on lists of trade goods and were regarded by traders as essential.

Many scholars have noted the presence of alcohol in detailed studies of various aspects of the slave trade and Atlantic commerce, but relatively few have explored their significance. José Curto's book is in fact the first extended treatment of the topic, and is for that reason alone very welcome. Following the flow of alcohol from Portugal and Brazil to Angola not only illuminates an intrinsically important topic, but enables Curto to provide fresh insight on a series of fundamental issues in the economic and political history of the South Atlantic in the slave trade era. Looking at the Atlantic trade through the alcohol lens illuminates discussion of the financing of the transatlantic trade and its profitability, the processes through which trade relations were built and the impact of international commerce in the Luanda hinterland – among numerous topics.

Curto's book follows the story of alcohol in Portuguese and Brazilian trade with Angola from its inception in the sixteenth century through the end of the legal slave trade era. In the early period of exploration and trade, Portuguese ships usually carried substantial quantities of wine, if only for its relatively long shelf life and its value as ballast. By the early 1600s it was already established as an important commodity in the acquisition of slaves. By the eighteenth century merchants based in Brazil gained the advantage in the South Atlantic slave trade and the development of the production and export of Brazilian rum, or *gerebita*, played a key role in securing that advantage. Although Curto argues that Joseph Miller has over-estimated the volume of alcohol in the slave trade, they are in firm agreement on its importance. By Curto's estimate (backed up with an



impressive range of quantitative sources), by the closing decades of the legal slave trade alcohol accounted for as much as a third of the value of all imports into Luanda.

This book is the product of prodigious research over many years, and the quantitative data that he has assembled, alone, make this an important contribution; twenty-four pages of graphs at the end of the book make fascinating reading on their own. But Curto stresses that he does not regard *Enslaving Spirits* primarily as a work of quantitative history. Rather he wishes to use quantified data, in conjunction with other evidence, to explore in greater depth issues that can be extremely difficult to interpret from standard literary sources.

Thus, with cautious reference to numerical data, Curto not only brings to life the shift in commercial ascendancy to Brazil-based merchants, but tempers claims of the impact of alcohol on Angolan society in a measured assessment of the levels of imports in relationship to local population. He might, however, have deepened his discussion with further investigation of the written accounts and the ways that differing cultural presumptions of inebriation shaped the conclusions conveyed by those texts. Curto provides fascinating information on the ways that various kinds of alcohol became deeply embedded in commercial relationships, but his analysis of adoption of imported drinks by local populations is less fully realized. He challenges assertions of earlier scholars that African consumers gained nothing new by embracing imported drinks, noting that these had (at least before they were adulterated) higher alcoholic content; but he does not really provide much indication of how tastes for these new products developed or were induced, how consumer demand ultimately helped shape the market and what Angolan drinking cultures looked like. His introductory overview of alcohol in African history may add little to what has been published elsewhere in recent years, but between the notes and bibliography, this book does provide a great wealth of wide-ranging references for future scholars.

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## AFRICAN RESISTANCE TO THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

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*Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*. Edited by SYLVIANE A. DIOUF. Athens OH: Ohio University Press; Oxford: James Currey, 2003. Pp. xxviii + 242. £45 (ISBN 0-8255-448-6); £16.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-447-8).  
KEY WORDS: West Africa, Central Africa, precolonial, slave trade, resistance.

The topic of opposition to slave trade on the African continent finally receives book-length treatment in this volume of fourteen essays on West Africa. Most of the data have been available for some time. What has changed is the emergence of a perspective placing a high priority on analyzing the sometimes scattered evidence on African resistance, rebellion and escape in the face of enslavement. Sylviane Diouf, in a concise but effective introduction, identifies the significance of the issue and summarizes the source material. In an approach aimed at once toward scholars and toward a broader readership in Africa, the African diaspora and those concerned with contemporary human rights, she addresses recent arguments that Africans failed themselves and their brethren by failing to unite against



enslavement. Instead, she asserts – in a thesis which should be pursued with further research – that the West African fight against slave trade did succeed in reducing the volume of slave trade.

The chapters are divided into three sections, on defensive strategies (escape and building defensive barriers), protective strategies (e.g. redeeming captured relatives) and offensive strategies (especially revolts). The early chapters on defensive constructions provide impressive examples of lake villages (Elisée Soumonni), hedges, caves, palisades and earthworks (Thierno Bah) and city walls (Martin Klein) as effective strategies of defense. Dennis Cordell generalizes the issue with a reconsideration of the assumed invincibility of slave raiders in north Central Africa. This five-chapter section adds good detail to a topic that is often mentioned in passing but rarely given detailed examination.

The two-chapter section on protective strategies shows the depth of the dilemmas associated with enslavement. Sylviane Diouf, in a chapter entitled ‘The last resort’, addresses the efforts of families to purchase the freedom of captured relatives before they were carried out of range, and notes some transoceanic efforts at redemption. But, she notes, the freeing of one person might therefore require the sale of more than one. Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson address another dangerous dimension of slave trading, as they observe the changing rules about who was enslaved among Efik merchants, from the expansion of pawning to cases of ‘blowing ekpe’ to protect pawns from being shipped out.

The section on offensive strategies addresses both the African continent and the Atlantic world. The chapters provide a relatively wide sample of regions and social systems in West Africa. John Oriji argues that both enslavement and resistance in Igbo country were more violent than often thought. In addition to resistance on the continent, David Richardson provides an analysis of slave revolts on shipboard along the Atlantic coast and on the high seas. This analysis focuses on the best documented slave trades: the French, Dutch and British trades of the eighteenth centuries, with interesting and specific breakdown by timing, place and gender. Joseph Inikori, in a chapter that ventures beyond the specific theme of the book, nonetheless provides useful background by developing a comparison with enslavement in Europe in medieval times.

Most of the chapters refer to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though Walter Hawthorne discusses earlier times in Guinea Bissau. In combination, the chapters provide a sense of both continuity and evolution in patterns of struggle against slave trade. The clearest portrayal of the evolution in patterns for fighting slavery comes in Ismail Rashid’s chapter on the Upper Guinea coast. The 1785 rebellion against Mandingo captors in Sierra Leone was crushed in ten years; in contrast the community of Laminyah founded by Bilali in 1838 sustained its independence in part with an anti-slavery vision of Islam. This anti-slavery dimension of Islam appeared in other cases. Almost as often, however, these successfully constituted defensive regimes ended up prosecuting slave trade on their own. It may be that such wavering anti-slavery was not a characteristic of Islam, but a characteristic of any political structure in an atmosphere where enslavement was endemic.

These concise chapters could profitably be used as course readings, as they add detail on a dimension of slave trade that is often underplayed. Carolyn Brown, in the epilogue, briefly addresses the memory of slavery as it is portrayed among the Igbo. Memory of enslavement and its costs remains alive in West African communities as well as among scholars.

## YORUBA FROM THE DIASPORA

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*Mapping Yorubá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities.* By KAMARI MAXINE CLARKE. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004. Pp. xxxiv + 345. £69 (ISBN 0-8223-3330-9); £17.50, paperback (ISBN 0-8223-3342-2).

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, diaspora, agency, anthropology, identity, religion.

On reading the title, historians of Africa might expect this book to be about Nigerian Yoruba migrants. Instead, Clarke's exploration of Yoruba networks focuses on Oyotunji African Village, a Yoruba revivalist community in the United States inhabited by African Americans who have accepted Yoruba as their religion. Clarke describes Oyotunji ritualists as intellectual producers who 'connect dislocated histories with U.S. realities' (p. 246). The book is an ethnography, yet history is key to it in at least two ways: first 'the history that happened' – of the transatlantic slave trade, the development of the state, racism in the United States, and colonialism in Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean – that explains the emerging of the Black Atlantic and the spread of Yoruba religious thought throughout the area. Second, the use or perhaps the appropriation of history, that makes it possible for African American practitioners of Yoruba to claim that their Yoruba-ness is as authentic as that of Yoruba in Nigeria; or perhaps even more authentic, as in their eyes Nigerian Yoruba have become too westernized as a result of colonialism. This also allows Oyotunji ritualists to carry out 'roots readings' in which they connect African Americans to families from precolonial and pre-slave trade Oyo, even though the overwhelming majority of enslaved Africans from Yoruba were transported to Brazil, not to the United States.

In addressing questions of race, transnationalism, citizenship, religion and identity in the Black Atlantic, this book in many ways builds on, but also moves beyond, Paul Gilroy's original formulation of the concept. Clarke attempts much here, too much, perhaps. Not only does the book offer at least three historical strands – the history of Yoruba religion as a transatlantic phenomenon; the history of thinking about race and identity by academics, activists and politicians since the 1850s; and the history of the context of capitalism, colonialism, slavery and the state – it also analyses the development of anthropology, the study of representation and current ritual practices in Oyotunji village. As a result, the book largely consists of fairly abstract discussions of the various contexts in which Yoruba revivalism emerged and continues to operate, with relatively little detailed ethnography on the Yoruba practices alluded to. Clarke subtly combines the analysis of discourse, including ritual, with political economy, and convincingly discusses power and agency in a transnational community. However, her book also frustrates in that it includes so little evidence that shows *how* this operated for Oyotunji.

The author takes some time to explain her methodology of mapping transnational networks and the advantages of multisided ethnography. Yet this does not really describe what her book does. The study makes very clear that Oyotunji is an important site in a network of Yoruba revivalism in the United States and beyond. However, rather than mapping the network, the study locates this one site in a global context (incidentally, the 'Map of slave route, 1790–1830' on p. 88 is very poor and does not even include exports from the Slave Coast).

Unavoidably, when looking towards Africa from Oyotunji, some statements about West African history are framed differently from how historians of Africa would write. For instance, her claim that 'the Oyo empire, comprising the kingdoms of Dahomey, Benin, and Oyo, was one of the last West African empires to

concede European conquest' (p. 87) would be regarded as inaccurate by most historians. However, it does offer an interesting insight into how West African history is understood within Yoruba revivalism. Also, while Clarke shrewdly observes how Yoruba practitioners in Oyotunji base much of their knowledge about Yoruba history and religion on early texts by African Christian missionaries such as Samuel Johnson as well as on colonial ethnographers, she herself presents a similar perspective on Western Nigerian history. This is not a book to read for what it says about African history, but for its subtle and inspiring analysis of the making of transnational community in the Black Atlantic.

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## HISTORIOGRAPHY AND VIOLENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE

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*Slavery and Beyond: The Making of Men and Chikunda Ethnic Identities in the Unstable World of South-Central Africa, 1750–1920.* By ALLEN E. ISAACMAN and BARBARA S. ISAACMAN. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2004. Pp. xii + 370. £56.99 (ISBN 0-325-00261-4); £16.99, paperback (ISBN 0-325-00261-6).

KEY WORDS: Mozambique, colonial, postcolonial, ethnicity, historiography, military, slavery, violence.

In the 1960s academic scramble for Africa, you did pretty well to settle for Mozambique. Few countries seemed so remote, shackled within the decaying Portuguese empire and made even more inaccessible by the onset of the wars of independence. Very little about the country existed in English, and Portuguese was not a language widely known. Virtually anything you wrote sounded original – the first books in English about Mozambique began by telling the reader where the country actually was. It was the next generation of researchers that had to develop a historiography.

On the other hand, Allen and Barbara Isaacman were unlucky to get stuck with the peoples of the middle Zambesi valley. True they were able to work with much richer Portuguese sources than were available, say, for the Lomwe further to the north. But the things that needed to be said, especially about the Chikunda, and that the Isaacmans in their new book have at long last got round to saying, could not fashionably be written three decades ago in the run-up to Mozambique's independence. In retrospect, there has been something heroic about their consistent attempt, without the benefit of irony, to give their people a heroic gloss. First, they were culture brokers, 'Africanizing' (through warlordism, witchcraft and polygamy) the Portuguese institution of the *prazos*. Next, along with neighbouring peoples in the Zambesi valley, they became resistance figures, fighting back against invading Portuguese armies. In response to the claim that these armies were trying to put down the slave trade, the Chikunda became 'social bandits' on the Hobsbawm model, on the 'right' side of the argument because the only other side was colonialism.

By contrast, here is the Chikunda 2004 version:

Armed with locally manufactured guns and imported weapons, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many slaves and their free descendants used their overwhelming superiority to raid and tyrannise their neighbours. As slavers and elephant hunters the Chikunda were often the point men of merchant capital and were ultimately responsible for

the enslavement of thousands of Zambesian peoples, the devastation of large herds of elephants, and the subsequent degradation of the environment. (p. 2)

They collaborated as much as they resisted, disdained all agricultural labour and were intensely and violently male-chauvinist. Several of the authors' informants compare them with Renamo. This willingness to admit contrary evidence, to the text rather than just the footnotes, makes *Slavery and Beyond* by far the richest, most fully considered and best written of the Isaacmans' books on Mozambique. In its focus on the Chikunda, it is unlikely to be superseded.

The Chikunda were primarily military slaves, recruited for their own protection by Portuguese women who began arriving from the mid-seventeenth century to take up estates granted them along the Zambesi valley by the Portuguese court. The grants were for the period (or 'prazo') of three generations in the female line, and contained the condition the holders should marry Portuguese men. By the mid-eighteenth century, when the first guesses are available, there were some 30,000 Chikunda, providing military protection, extracting taxes and labour and dominating the region's trade. They were, as Tete Governor Villas-Boas Truão wrote in 1806, the force that kept the colony functioning. With the decline of the prazo system, under the impact of the slave trade and of Gaza raiding, followed by its official abolition by Lisbon, the Chikunda reinvented themselves as the professional elephant hunters and canoe men of the valley. The two chapters describing this development are by far the best in the book, crisply written and with a wealth of fascinating detail. Other Chikunda migrated to neighbouring territory, setting up what were essentially imitations of the prazo system, little warlord polities surviving for a generation or two until the impact of colonial rule made them obsolete. The chapters describing these 'conquest states' are more routine and, in the case of Kanyemba, positively dispiriting as the Isaacmans finally lose all patience with his 'state sanctioned violence' and 'delight in shedding blood' (p. 250).

In the past, the Isaacmans have been a little too ready to compress Mozambique's complex realities into models imported from elsewhere – hence their nationalist resistance and social bandit paradigms. A welcome feature of this new book is that they tease out the implications of Chikunda history for similar studies elsewhere. Their status as military slaves, for example, so unlike the situation in the American South, illuminates what has already been observed for slave regimes throughout the Middle East and in the West Indies. The emergence of Chikunda ethnicity takes its place in the established debate about the origins of tribalism and the fluidity of ethnic boundaries while, given their topic, the authors obviously have much to say about the construction of male identity. In the end, though, this is a book about frontiers, a theme long present in South African history but largely ignored further to the north – except in the Isaacmans' earlier books.

I have minor niggles. The new tax regime in Zambesia was imposed in 1878 (not 1888), provoking the Makuta rising about which they have written elsewhere. Matekenya (Mariano Vaz dos Anjos) did indeed die in 1881, but his polity was still sufficiently alive to launch the Massingiri rising of 1884, which again they have written of elsewhere. Involved in both these risings was the burgeoning trade in oil seeds, for which the Chikunda provided portage. A footnote acknowledges that for the Tanzanian hinterland, trade goods involved copal, rubber, hides and wax as well as ivory. What about the Zambesi valley? They are also wrong to identify the late Leroy Vail with the top-down 'invented tradition' model of ethnicity in southern Africa. Vail's seminal discussion of the role of African culture brokers, articulating with the structures of power, fits the Chikunda case comfortably.

There are moments when their closeness to their oral sources leads them to write absurdities (the hunters 'carried medicines ... to make them invisible' [p. 87]). But in one area they are inclined to be suspicious. Informants who suggested the Chikunda were 'like RENAMO' are ticked off for interpreting the past in terms of a more recent 'campaign of terror' (p. 29). Yet as Vines and Newitt have shown, Renamo's activities can all too plausibly be related to cycles of historical violence in Zambia. This book's opening anecdote, praising two sprightly old men, marching, stamping and saluting, recalling 'an earlier, more glorious time' of 'famed hunters, accomplished canoe men and fierce soldiers' (p. 1), seemed at first a relatively harmless piece of multicultural waffle. By the end, I felt less sanguine.

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## SLAVERY IN GHANA

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*A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th Century.* By AKOSUA ADOMA PERBI. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004. Pp. xxiv + 231. \$49.95 (ISBN 9988-550-95-2).

KEY WORDS: Ghana, slavery, precolonial.

Over the past four decades, African historians have made significant contributions to the discipline of history in the reconciliation of documentary and oral sources. Similarly, scholars of slavery in Africa had made great strides in integrating the study of the external and intra-regional slave trades and of domestic slavery. Historians of Ghana have been at the forefront of both efforts. In the 1970s, significant scholarly work by John Kofi Fynn, among others, broke ground in the collection and interpretation of oral traditions in southern Ghana. Not long afterward, Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson initiated the modern documentary analysis of slavery and emancipation in Ghana. These historical works joined anthropological treatments of slavery by R. S. Rattray for Ghana and, more generally, Claude Meillassoux. Because of the work of these pioneers, the following generation of scholars investigating slavery in Ghana thus had a wide body of literature upon which to draw, and their investigations were informed work on neighboring regions of West Africa.

Akosua Adoma Perbi is a leading figure in the historical study of Ghanaian slavery. As a public historian, her work with UNESCO on slave trade sites and emancipation day festivities is rightly celebrated. Her 1978 MA thesis on domestic slavery in Asante is well known to scholars who take the time to seek out the dog-eared copy in Balme Library, but to few others. In her Ph.D. thesis (University of Ghana) and now her book, Perbi has grafted research in regions other than Asante on to the original thesis. The aim of her study is made eminently clear in the first pages of the book, in which she writes that 'slavery in Ghana must be examined and appreciated from the Ghanaian perspective, definitions, classifications and perceptions of slavery' (p. 12).

Unlike the European- and American-trained scholars who have worked on slavery in the Gold Coast, Perbi herself is firmly situated in Ghana, in the Department of History at Legon. Over more than a decade, she has collected literally hundreds of interviews. She has had ongoing access to theses and obscure collections of oral sources that are only ferreted out of Balme and the National Archives of Ghana through diligence and patience. Yet she has also been in close

contact with scholars in Europe and the United States. Among the key sources she uses are Basel Mission documents obtained from the archivists and historians of Ghanaian slavery Paul Jenkins and Peter Haenger. She has worked closely with Martin Klein and Sheila Walker, and has spent significant time at the Public Records Office in Kew, as well as in the United States.

Perbi was therefore in the position of writing potentially the most complete synthesis of documentary and oral history sources on domestic slavery in Ghana to date. Certainly her book contributes to a number of important debates. The first chapter assesses the uniqueness of Ghanaian slavery and enters the debate on definitions and origins of slavery. Subsequent chapters assess modes of enslavement and the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on domestic slavery, slave livelihoods and employment and the place of slaves in the greater web of social relationships as well as in political systems. Finally, she engages Dumett and Johnson in the debate over abolition and emancipation. All this is applied to each of the many regions of Ghana.

This is a huge task of great magnitude, and as the book is quite short it suffers from the expected omissions and superficialities. The three-page assessment of 'slavery and state building from the 1st to the 15th century A.D.' for example is utterly without citation, despite the fact that it makes several broad claims. Other sections suffer from a slightly anachronistic treatment. The extensive chapter on abolition, for example, skims over modes of liberation, the roles of families and post-liberation livelihoods. To some degree this can be explained by holes in the author's reading of secondary sources. Perbi has failed to consult not only my work and that of Kwabena Akurang-Parry, but more surprisingly Peter Haenger's excellent text. This lapse is mirrored by other worrying omissions. Perbi seems barely to have consulted the rich SCT (court) files in Accra, a strange oversight considering their proximity. Moreover, the treatment of material gathered through interviews is unconventional. In at least two places, Perbi conducts a statistical analysis of her results to determine historical methods of slave acquisition and employment. Since the interviews were collected after 1990 and she is mapping the results to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it seems reasonable to question her methodology.

In fact, the study works best when it relies heavily upon the 1978 thesis, and consequently focuses upon Asante. For her original research, Perbi was uniquely situated to conduct an important social science study of slaves within Asante society, and her innovative discussion of Asante 'Esom Dwa' service stools, for example, carries through well to this monograph. Despite its limitations, any serious scholar of slavery in Ghana will find much of interest in this text.

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## LA TRAJECTOIRE POLITIQUE TUNISIENNE

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*A History of Modern Tunisia*. Edited by KENNETH J. PERKINS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. xvii + 249. £40/\$70 (ISBN 0-521-81124-4); £15.99/\$24.99, paperback (ISBN 0-521-00972-3).

KEY WORDS: Tunisia, colonial, postcolonial.

Kenneth J. Perkins nous propose avec cet ouvrage un essai remarquable sur l'histoire 'moderne' de la Tunisie, alliant rigoureusement temps colonial et temps

présent. Nourri d'une solide information historique et politique et d'une riche bibliographie, ce livre est une fine lecture synthétique de la trajectoire politique tunisienne composée par les expériences successives des pouvoirs vécues par le pays depuis les réformes engagées par la monarchie beylicale Husseinite au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, jusqu'au 'changement' de 1987 et la mise en place du nouveau régime, héritier de l'Etat bourguibien de l'indépendance. En questionnant le passé récent de la Tunisie, l'auteur tente d'apporter des éléments de réponse pour la compréhension de l'expérience tunisienne contemporaine, aisément saisissable au niveau politique et économique qu'au niveau social et culturel.

Depuis l'ère des réformes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'au présent immédiat, les politiques en place se sont successivement attelées à l'éradication des institutions et pratiques sociales traditionnelles au lien étroit avec la religion et la coutume, dans le but d'asseoir une modernité sans entraves. Largement marquée par l'interférence des diverses influences étrangères, la construction de cette trajectoire politique a été marquée par l'équation complexe entre les référents identitaires et les exigences d'un développement moderne durable. Et la question est devenu encore plus pressante avec le nouveau régime de Ben Ali, mis en place depuis le 7 novembre 1987. Les paradoxes, les contradictions et les ambiguïtés qui ont marqué la politique avec laquelle le pouvoir a traité les dossiers de l'islamisme, de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme, sont au centre de cette équation. A peine sorti d'un pouvoir étouffant de Bourguiba, '*la Tunisie a vite basculé dans une nouvelle expérience du pouvoir personnel d'un président*' qui, pourtant s'en est bien gardé en prononçant sa déclaration, le 7 novembre. Est-ce là 'un déterminisme historique' pour la Tunisie: un présent bien inscrit dans le passé?

Ce livre se repose sur l'idée de la persistance et de l'ancrage de l'autoritarisme du pouvoir: un Etat au service du parti, un parti au service d'un président. Ni les ruptures qu'il a du subir, ni les innovations dont il se flatte, ni les choix économiques et culturels de libéralisation et d'ouverture, n'ont abouti au véritable changement. Pourtant beaucoup d'indices, tant au niveau politique que social et culturel, ont manifesté d'une ingéniosité tunisienne et d'une conscience démocratique, remarquablement formulées par une large frange d'intellectuels et de politiques opposés d'abord à l'autoritarisme de Bourguiba et ensuite aux dérives autoritaires de Ben Ali.

Cependant, l'interventionnisme de l'Etat dans le processus de réforme et de modernisation semble être la donnée fondamentale dans la construction de la Tunisie moderne. Depuis le XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle la Tunisie s'est engagée dans la voie des réformes pour une meilleure adéquation avec les nouvelles données de la conjoncture méditerranéenne. Poussé certes, par les pressions extérieures, l'Etat beylical, depuis le règne d'Ahmed Bey (1837-55) et jusqu'à celui de Mohammed al Sadiq Bey (1859-82), s'est lancé dans une succession de réformes tant institutionnelles et administratives que sociales et économiques, Mais, il n'était pas surprenant que ces réformes libérales échouent. Engagées par un pouvoir de plus en plus en rupture avec la société profonde, elles ont été contestées autant par le large mouvement social que par des élites qui y ont vu des innovations indésirables répondant aux intérêts européens.

La période coloniale est analysée sous les aspects de la construction de l'administration coloniale, de la mainmise économique sur les ressources minières et agricoles et de l'aménagement du territoire au profit des intérêts coloniaux. La naissance du nationalisme tunisien depuis le Destour de Thaalbi en 1920 jusqu'à l'émergence du Néo-Destour en 1934 et les expériences du syndicalisme ouvrier tunisien sont décrites comme autant de composantes du bloc national en formation sous l'effet des transformations sociales, économiques et intellectuelles. L'indépendance tunisienne en 1956 se traduit par la mise en place de l'Etat



national réformateur et centralisateur autour d'un parti et d'un chef: Bourguiba qui s'imposa comme chef unique et incontesté après l'élimination de son principal rival politique, Salah ben Youssef.

L'expérience de modernisation nationale a touché tous les domaines de la vie: L'Ecole moderne, le droit, et particulièrement le statut de la femme, la famille et l'environnement social. L'économie libérale cède vite la place à un dirigisme économique de type socialiste (le socialisme destourien) d'où le développement de pôles industriels étatiques régionaux et l'intégration de la paysannerie dans le système de collectivisation agraire fermement défendu par le puissant ministre de l'économie Ahmed ben Salah.

L'échec de cette expérience en 1969 et le retour à une économie libérale avec Hédi Nourra, si il a permis de stabiliser l'économie et de reprendre un rythme de croissance et d'investissement soutenu, n'a pas abouti à la libéralisation politique. L'intermède pluraliste des années 1980, durant lequel ont émergé les nouveaux partis politiques (mouvement islamiste, socio-démocrates et formations de gauche) et la puissante centrale syndicale, n'a pas résisté devant les tendances monopolisatrices du champ politique par un Etat-Parti hégémonique. L'échec des élections législatives pluralistes de 1981 en est la preuve avec son corollaire la répression du mouvement islamiste.

La fin du régime de Bourguiba en 1987 intervint dans un contexte du vide politique et de fragilisation de l'économie et de la société. De ce point le président Ben Ali a pu rétablir les équilibres économiques, relancé la croissance et développé une politique sociale de lutte contre la pauvreté; il a redonné espoir aux élites politiques et intellectuelles modernes en optant pour la poursuite des réformes modernisatrices. Le pacte national élaboré en 1988 a rassemblé autour de ses principes les courants de pensées modernes les plus divers tout en confirmant le caractère arabo-musulman de l'identité tunisienne. Cependant cette orientation marque le pas avec la crise ouverte entre le pouvoir politique et le mouvement islamiste Ennahdha à partir de 1990 et la répression anti-islamiste qui s'en suivit. Le réinvestissement du champ politique par le pouvoir autoritaire se confirme pour montrer les limites des réformes politiques annoncées auparavant. L'Etat-Parti prend le dessus sur le processus de changement.

Par ses multiples dimensions, le travail de Kenneth Perkins ne se limite pas à scander et à analyser le politique tel que vécu par la Tunisie durant plus d'un siècle et demi, il se veut une large rétrospective tunisienne mettant à l'œuvre le travail de l'historien, du politologue, du sociologue et du critique littéraire. L'appréhension des multiples registres abordés par l'auteur, même si elle laisse quelques points dans l'ombre, elle permet au lecteur de saisir les plus importants repères de l'histoire de la Tunisie contemporaine et d'élucider quelques aspects de la spécificité tunisienne pour une meilleure compréhension des mécanismes du pouvoir en place ainsi que des dynamiques et des limites du mouvement politique autonome.

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## AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPLORERS IN WEST AFRICA

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*African-American Exploration in West Africa: Four Nineteenth-Century Diaries.*

Edited by JAMES FAIRHEAD, TIM GEYSBEEK, SVEND E. HOLSOE and MELISSA LEACH. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. Pp. xi + 488. \$59.95 (ISBN 0-253-34194-9).

KEY WORDS: Precolonial, diaspora, Liberia, exploration/travel.

The editors of this engaging volume hereby served notice to authors of standard African history texts. This book features African-American explorers into the interior of Liberia during the nineteenth century. Maps of explorations now need revision to include African-Americans alongside European explorers into the so-called 'Dark Continent'. With an Introduction, the book contains seven chapters, and in Chapter 2, six maps show travels in the Liberian interior; similar maps of individual interior travels repeat themselves again in diaries found in Chapters 3–6.

The editors devoted much effort to locating the Americo-Liberians' diaries and sundry for inclusion in the book. Chapter 7 provides ethno-linguistic data and discusses indigenous knowledge and technologies, and the ubiquitous slavery, and makes place-name corrections to the interior travel accounts themselves. Endnotes are annotated with an excellent bibliography for further research at the Svend E. Holsoe Collection at Indiana University. While some of the standard history of Liberia appears in Chapters 1–2, the diasporic settlers themselves represented a bundle of dialectical contradictions resulting from the interplay of Atlantic world encounters. They were descendants of Africa through the Atlantic slave trade, slaves in a hostile and alien US territory, inheritors of transmitted mixed feelings for the continent of their descent because of their 'enemies' who sold them. As settlers through the American Colonization Society 'non-benevolent "disposal"' to Liberia, they found themselves treating the indigenous people as they were almost treated back in the antebellum USA. An alternative perspective emerged among some of the settlers within the Liberian government out of *realpolitik*. As the editors note 'to forge stronger and more equitable links with the African nations of the interior, ... would be mutually beneficial and would facilitate large-scale American colonization' (p. 1). Fearful of foreigners and colonial annexation, the Liberian government linked national pride to exploration and preservation of border expansion. Four aims emerged: to gain knowledge of the interior peoples and resources; to extend Liberian government control over the interior peoples through treaties and the ceding of territory; to negotiate with local polities to remove bottlenecks to trade; and to establish Christian missions, from the forest region of Monrovia to the savannah reaches of the Islamic and 'superior' Manding civilization of Musadu, located today in Guinea. Musadu was 230 miles (370 kilometers) from Monrovia by direct route, and '430 zig-zag miles' (690 kilometers).

Americo-Liberians forged far into the interior. Funded through a variety of sources from the US, their government and wealthy Liberian merchants, they studied geometry and other relevant subjects in preparation. Armed with appropriate instruments for astronomical calculations (maps, compasses, sextants, barometers, thermometers), and gifts (Liberia Lone Star flags, presents for chiefs, paper, porter-carriers, Arabic Bibles and guns for protection), they consisted of (with years of travel and places reached) Connecticut 'mullato' born James L. Seymour (1855–8, Monrovia to Bopolu-Wennwata), Virginia 'mullato' born James L. Sims (1858, Edina to Oussadu-Wosodu), Delaware 'free' born William Spencer Anderson (1870, Monrovia to Barline Country – Kpayekwele) and Baltimore 'full blooded Negro' born Benjamin J. K. Anderson, who from Monrovia reached Musadu twice (1868–9, 1874) and 'deserves great credit as having been practically the only Liberian, who has made a direct contribution to geographical literature' (p. 241). The Smithsonian recognized Anderson with 500 published copies of his book in 1870, and the Royal Geographical Society 'placed Anderson's book alongside the works of Africa's other great explorers': Barth, Livingstone and Laing (p. 57). In efforts to invalidate the Franco-Liberian Treaty of 1892 that set Liberia's boundary at Nionsamoridu (just 17 miles south of

Musadu in Guinea), French explorer Captain d'Ollone, who never visited Monrovia, attempted to discredit Anderson's travels and astronomical calculations in a 1903 publication, *Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique Française*: 'Add to all that, that Anderson, who many think to be an English person, or an American, is simply a black Liberian; that none of his brethren have ever dared adventure more than 10 km from the sea or navigable river ... he had only very ordinary education' (quoted on pp. 79–80). 'Africanist' and French Consul Maurice Delafosse to Monrovia deflected d'Ollone's charges as did Anderson in his five-page rebuttal published both in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* and in the *Liberia Recorder* in 1903 (pp. 84–8).

Travel in the interior was risky. Settlers were 'black white men' to the interior peoples. Monrovia had 250 inches of rainfall per year and the savannah 70 inches; encounters with overflowing rivers and streams were frequent. The travelers had to be excellent swimmers, and often had to swim for their lives from bush-whackers, one of whom was believed to be Samori Touré (1858–9), who caused Seymour and assistant Levin Ash (from Indiana) to abandon their mission in 1858. Seymour swam away injured near Wosodo (South of Kuankan) but Ash was captured and enslaved:

stripped naked, and a large stick fastened to his leg by an iron strap ... kept in this condition for ten days ... one hand tied to his neck, and driven to large towns to be sold for a gun; but they could make no sale of him ... without clothes for fifteen days, they were restored to him.

Ash ran away later to freedom and rejoined Seymour, who never recovered from his wounds and died later at Paynesville, October 1860.

Finally, this collaborative work depicts a history of Liberia in its most 'prosperous' and 'populous times'. It should provide inspiration to the Liberian peoples in efforts to rebuild their nation in the millennium that began in 1847 as the first republic in Africa.

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## NEW APPROACHES TO GERMAN COLONIALISM

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*Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military, and Humanitarian Efforts in Africa.* By NINA BERMAN. Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Pp. x + 271. £37.95 (ISBN 0-8032-1334-4).

KEY WORDS: Colonialism, historiography, postcolonial.

While in France and especially in Britain the respective colonial empires and imperialisms are still the subject of numerous engaging and controversial historiographical debates, there is far less discussion in Germany about the – admittedly comparatively short-lived – German colonial empire in Africa, the Pacific and in Shantung. All too often the history of German colonialism is treated as an appendix of the German Kaiserreich. In the meantime there are, however, a few solid though mostly fairly conventional surveys, at least packed with facts. Moreover, in the course of the last three decades, a number of academic monographs on various aspects of German colonialism have been published. Most of

these present the fruits of empiricist 'toil'. New approaches in international research on colonialism were reflected sporadically at best; ambitious theoretical outlines were hardly ventured. More recently some literary scholars and anthropologists, mainly from the United States, have made new attempts which can largely be subsumed under the heading of 'postcolonial studies'. Often on the basis of a relatively small set of contemporary texts, these scholars attempt to dissect the 'colonial discourse' in imperial Germany. Though most of this work ignores much of the empirical data available and shows a tendency to self-indulgent over-theorisation as well as a certain ignorance of the more violent realities of colonial rule, it opens up exciting questions, for example on race and gender. Now some younger historians in Germany, too, have taken up these ideas, looking at the short-term as well as long-term effects of the colonial experience on German metropolitan culture and politics.

The study by Nina Berman, a professor of German at the University of Nebraska, represents both the advantages and disadvantages of the new approaches to Germany's colonial past. Her book focuses on Germans 'who went to Africa with "good intentions" but whose interference in local affairs often had disastrous consequences for Africans' (p. 1). These individuals include Max Eyth, an engineer, who worked in Egypt in the 1860s; then Albert Schweitzer, the famous 'jungle doctor', who spent a considerable part of his life as a medical doctor in Lambaréné in French Equatorial Africa. After the Second World War, the already elderly Schweitzer was celebrated by many Europeans, especially in Germany, as an incarnation of the good Samaritan. Moreover, Lambaréné became a mythical site, a place where 'German culture' survived during the 'dark years'. Born in Alsace, Schweitzer was a French citizen; however, this did not prevent Germans celebrating him as 'their' hero. The third person in Berman's focus is Ernst Udet, an aviator who made a movie in East Africa in the early 1930s and was later eternalized in Carl Zuckmayer's much-performed theatre play *Des Teufels General* (The Devil's General). Another chapter is devoted to Bodo Kirchoff, a writer who visited the German army contingent in Somalia in 1993 and published a diary of his visit. The final chapter does not deal with an individual but rather presents the experiences of contemporary German tourists in Kenya who repeatedly return to the country and 'turn into aid workers', providing various kinds of support to Kenyans. This part is mainly based on ethnographic fieldwork and survey work conducted by the author.

According to Berman, the persons featuring in her book could be labelled as 'secular missionaries', promoting what they regarded as modern European civilization in African contexts. She teases out the often considerable discrepancy between how these Germans viewed their role in Africa and the material repercussions of their presence. Schweitzer, especially, is harshly criticized for his narrow construction of Africa and Africans and for his elitist cultural outlook. Berman is certainly right in claiming that the protagonists of her story failed to take account of the complexities of the historical and contemporary contexts of the African societies with which they were dealing. However, this does not come as a huge surprise. Moreover, the analytical framework seems fairly arbitrary and the author is not very careful, to say the least, in establishing the historical contexts of the various settings. For instance, Berman's accounts of East Africa in the early 1930s (where Ernst Udet's film was shot) and of Somali history are quite superficial.

Thus *Impossible Missions* provides some interesting details and insights, but lacks careful contextualization as well as coherence.

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SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY  
OF THE OVAMBO FLOODPLAINS

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*Re-Creating Eden: Land Use, Environment, and Society in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia.* By EMMANUEL KREIKE. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2004. Pp. xii + 294. \$99.95 (ISBN 0-325-07077-6); £29.95, paperback (ISBN 0-325-07076-8).

KEY WORDS: Angola, Namibia, environment, social.

Emmanuel Kreike presents a socio-environmental history of the Ovambo floodplains through this historical case-study of the region of Oukwanyama from the 1880s to 1960. In many ways the book is a history of the evolution of the modern Angolan-Namibian borderlands. It traces large-scale population movements from southern Angola to northern Namibia, and the rapid socio-economic as well as environmental transformations that occurred in the wake of colonial and mission expansion of Portuguese, German, South African and Finnish origins. An important focus of the book are 'transformation histories' (p. 2) in local memory, of individuals and households. According to the author, these stress survival, re-construction and adaptation more than resistance as such. Apart from oral histories, the analysis is based on written sources from various colonial and mission archives and a broad reading of case studies for other African regions.

Oukwanyama was re-created during the period under review as migrants and refugees from southern Angolan Oukwanyama transformed the 'wilderness' (*ofuka*) in the Namibian/South African part of the floodplains into 'habitable space' (*oshilongo*). Kreike reconstructs local initiatives to develop basic economic and social infrastructures (starting with the construction of water systems for husbandary and agriculture), and also the initiatives of colonial powers to enforce taxation, extract labour and control both livestock movements and local authorities. The competition between the two main colonial powers, Portugal and South Africa, over control of people and cattle provided a major reason for the migrations and flights into, and transformations of, the middle and eastern floodplains in Namibia. It allowed for multiple spaces to be manipulated by local populations in search of new settlement, crop and grazing areas. As such, central topics in Southern African historiography, like migrant labour, settlement initiatives by refugees or the dynamics of christianisation, are linked in this account to the dynamics of such competition. Kreike sees the migrant labour system as having been both a drastic colonial intervention and a carefully mapped strategy by individual men and households in order to invest and, as such, facilitate the process of developing their settlements. The simultaneous processes of local re-construction and regional colonial expansion account for major changes in gender relations, land rights and religion, all of which are dealt with by the author.

Environmental change in this book is basically viewed in the light of the inter-related concepts of *ofuka* and *oshilongo*. The author convincingly shows how *ofuka* regions could rapidly change into *oshilongo* regions and vice versa. Two issues remain rather sketchy in the book. One is the processes of mapping and re-mapping of local environments, in contrast to the larger, regional processes of claiming new land. The other is the conceptualizations of environmental change once habitable environments had been created. From this narrative it seems that the so-called *oshilongo* regions, becoming (at least on the Namibian side of the border) increasingly settled, tended to face increasingly severe environmental pressure – yet seemingly remained, in local views, habitable. What, then, were the local

conceptualizations of such constraints and of environmental change in regions which had lost much of the character of a re-created 'Eden'?

*Basler Afrika Bibliographien*

DAG HENRICHSEN

## FOLLOWING THE MIGRANT MINeworkERS HOME

doi:10.1017/S0021853705341338

*Basotho and the Mines: A Social History of Labour Migrancy in Lesotho and South Africa, c. 1890–1940.* By EDDY TSHIDISO MALOKA. Dakar: Codesria, 2004. Pp. xi + 257. £28.95/\$47.95, paperback (ISBN 2-85978-128-8).

KEY WORDS: Labour, mining, social, Lesotho, South Africa.

Once upon a time at a University of Cape Town seminar, Dr. Eddy Maloka spoke of miners returning to the villages of colonial Lesotho from the gold mines of Johannesburg. Some, he said, would 'off ramp' from the main route on their way home: a delightful metaphor for the Basotho miners' tramping system.

*Basotho and the Mines* is Maloka's solidly researched, detailed look at the development of an important subset of the migrant labour economy of Southern Africa. But for a few accidents of history, Lesotho would be part of South Africa today. Completely surrounded, tiny Lesotho was efficiently stripped of its economic independence as thoroughly as were the other African polities which lay inside the boundaries of South Africa. The British wanted their little protectorate to pay for itself and make its contribution to the Empire. If collaborating in the stripping away of the Basotho's labour assets via their own chiefs, recruiters, missionaries and self-appointed labour agents was the best way to do this, then so it would be. Indeed, Maloka speculates at the end of the book on the logic of the reincorporation of Lesotho into South Africa.

Maloka's intention is to tell Lesotho's migrant labour story 'from below' for the first time. Basotho miners appear fairly frequently in the historiography of mine labour in South Africa, but before this book, only in so far as they were resident in South Africa. Maloka is concerned to follow them from home to the mines and back. Like other social historians he privileges the perspectives of the Basotho miners rather than those of the South African mine owners. Unlike the earlier generation of South African social historians, he is not barred from linguistic insights into his subject material. Insightful translations of Sotho phrases, terminology and social concepts pepper the book.

Maloka reports that he was the first historian to make use of some of the Lesotho National Archive's holdings (which he writes were in great disarray at the time) on migrant labour. Thus, the strengths of this book are in its careful archival research and its overriding preoccupation with presenting Basotho miners as agents in the making of their own history.

Ironically, the main strength is also its main weakness. For a social history published in 2004 the book reads most like an early 1980s economic history: migration and census statistics, and telling stories of eccentric characters who by dint of sheer weight of archival correspondence made their historical mark – but with insufficient sense and feel of the rich textures of the lives of the miners and their families and communities. Of course Maloka's period (the five decades preceding 1940) prevented him from doing interviews with miners, all of whom have long since died. Details of song lyrics and stories are very welcome; one would have wanted more of this kind of detail carefully historicized.

This kind of social history seems somewhat lost, when shorn of the previously umbilical connection to a particular version of revisionist Marxism, which tried to show that miners were developing dynamics of understanding which would eventually lead them into anti-capitalist revolt of one kind or another. Such a tale could be largely devoid of references to individuals because the process itself was a collective one. But when shorn of this *raison d'être*, the reader is left craving more detail about miners' lives: what they ate, what kind of clothes they wore, their songs, hopes, dreams. Maloka has shed the revisionism but not the framework that it left behind, which makes for a narrative with a rather old-fashioned feel.

Maloka tries to give the other side of the coin of Philip Bonner's by-now mantra-like description of Basotho women living on the outskirts of the mining economy of the Witwatersrand being judged as 'undesirables' by the mining bosses and urban residents – 'wild' women who flung up their skirts at men, taunted them and boldly sold them beer and sexual services. Yet there is little discussion of Basotho women outside the roles of beer brewers and prostitutes, or even of a re-examination of these by now well-worn stereotypes. True, there are 'women in the book' but it only briefly discusses conflicts and compromises involved in the making, breaking and refashioning of gender identities as a successful peasant economy was being forcibly dislocated. *Basotho and the Mines* could be read profitably in conjunction with Marc Epprecht's *This Matter of Women is Getting Very Bad: Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho* (Pietermaritzburg, 2000). On a technical note, the maps are so blurred as to be sometimes unreadable and the print quality is light and indistinct on some pages. Maloka's book will be useful for teaching approaches to mine labour in Southern Africa, and in courses on twentieth-century Lesotho and South Africa.

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TERESA A. BARNES

## THE MANDATE SYSTEM MATTERED

doi:10.1017/S0021853705351334

*A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929–1946*. By MICHAEL D. CALLAHAN. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004. Pp. xii + 308. £55 (ISBN 1-84519-016-5).

KEY WORDS: Colonial administration, international relations, League of Nations.

This is the second of two books in which the author examines the history of the League of Nations' Mandate System in Africa, from its establishment in 1919–20 to its demise between 1939 and 1946 and its replacement in 1945–6 by the United Nations' Trusteeship System. Volume 1, *Mandates and Empire* (Brighton, 1999), dealing with the years 1914–31, focused on the internationalization of colonial administration in the former German colonies, under the auspices of the mandatory powers notably Britain and France supervised by the League's Permanent Mandates Commission. This volume, the product of equally painstaking and impressive archival research in British and French private as well as official public papers, completes the tale with the setting up in 1947 of effective supervision under the United Nations' Trusteeship Council.

It has often been suggested that the inter-war mandates system was an early twentieth-century exercise in the re-partition of Africa by the old imperial powers. They helped draft the terms of the mandates, effectively institutionalizing their own colonial administrative practice, and naturally remained content with a system



no more than cosmetically different from their own. Callahan will have none of this. He argues that President Wilson's ideal, involving the internationalization of sovereignty and mandatory powers committed to a 'sacred trust', rapidly became embedded in the discourse and practice of British and French colonialism. These ideals not only informed a real distinction between 'mandates' and 'colonies'. Given institutional form in regular supervision by the Permanent Mandates Commission and the reports by the mandatory powers, they exerted a constant pressure everywhere for the gradual reform and improvement of colonial administration. This had significant if uneven results by 1940.

Much space is given to the continuous concern with the operation of the mandates in British and French exchanges, in European diplomacy and in the colonial powers' domestic politics. There are, for instance, useful analyses of the place of the mandate system's principles in the early handling of the Abyssinian crisis of 1935–6 and the Hoare-Laval plan; of the consequences for Britain and France of Germany as a public critic with a seat, temporarily, on the Mandates Commission; and of the system's influence on Neville Chamberlain's handling of colonial affairs in his pre-war exchanges with Hitler. League publicity was vital in stimulating public scrutiny of the system, and informing left-wing pressure for the complete internationalization of the African colonies. As a whole, much light is thrown on the persistent inter-war debate surrounding 'trusteeship', taking readers well beyond the common emphasis on its origins with left-wing theorists and worries about white settlers.

Rather less attention is devoted to the direct impact of the mandate system in Africa itself. This follows partly from concentration on Togoland, Cameroon and the Tanganyika territory: South West Africa, for example, hardly features here, but might have produced a more qualified estimate of the system's impact. Instances are cited of local settler concern at the implications of mandate administration, and examples are provided of ways in which Africans were able to appeal to wider audiences and authorities than were open to them in either British or French colonies. Evidently the mandates system worked against their being managed in an exclusively national interest – in land and labour policies, in the exclusion of foreigners, in protective closure of their markets and by integration into neighbouring colonies. Fear of public exposure and criticism seems to have been an uncommonly widespread official feeling. Both in many of these particular issues, however, and in the case of more general claims – that the mandate system enabled its members to weather more successfully than colonies the inter-war economic fluctuations – more supporting evidence would be welcome in order to dispel lingering suspicions of an over-reliance on contemporary rhetoric and assessments. Nonetheless, this is an authoritative and valuable work, of interest to historians of colonial Africa as a whole as well as students of colonial policy-making.

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ANDREW PORTER

## NEXT DOOR TO VICHY

doi:10.1017/S0021853705361330

*Soldiers, Airmen, Spies, and Whisperers: The Gold Coast in World War II.*

By NANCY ELLEN LAWLER. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2002.

Pp. xxiii + 286. \$49.95 (ISBN 0-8214-1430-5).

KEY WORDS: War, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, colonial.

With the fall of France in June 1940, the four British colonies in West Africa, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, found themselves in a tricky situation. The decision by the rulers of the federation of French West Africa to declare for Marshall Pétain's collaborationist Vichy regime meant – unexpectedly – that they were largely surrounded on their land borders by potentially hostile enemy territory. The declaration of Equatorial Africa for General De Gaulle's Free French provided some relief on Nigeria's eastern frontier with Cameroon, but for the next two and a half years the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) remained hemmed in by Vichy-ruled colonies with numerically superior military forces. The precariousness of the Gold Coast's situation became a matter of even greater imperial concern when in late 1940 the port of Takoradi was established as a key link in the so-called West African Reinforcement Route, the chain of airfields across the continent through which Allied aircraft were flown to the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean campaigns. With the colony now an important strategic outpost in the struggle against fascism, it soon became the haunt of agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the other branches of the British secret services – the 'spies and whisperers' of the title of this account of the Second World War as it played out in the Gold Coast.

The war has long been considered a watershed in the history of Africa in the twentieth century and it has featured prominently in the standard narrative of the precocious emergence of radical anti-colonial nationalism in the Gold Coast. Yet Nancy Lawler engages only tangentially with the debates over the impact of the conflict on Gold Coast society and politics. Neither does her book represent a subaltern studies-type social history of African servicemen, such as those that recently have transformed our knowledge of the experience of French West African soldiers in the First World War or of Kenyan soldiers in the King's African Rifles. If the 'spies and whisperers' are almost exclusively European, so too are the airmen manning the West African Reinforcement Route, while the African soldiers of the Gold Coast Regiment and the local Home Guard feature only insofar as their recruitment became a pressing issue for the colonial administration. What the book does provide is a detailed, lively – and sometimes light-hearted – narrative of wartime political intrigue in a remote colonial outpost; to use the language of the century's first global conflict, of a 'side-show' within a side-show. With its cast of colourful characters, shadowy agents, 'hush-hush' espionage missions and 'most secret' telegrams, it is reminiscent at times of Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* – albeit without the love interest. We even find Vichy Governor-General Pierre Boisson waiting in 1942 – like Claude Rains's cynical *Casablanca* police chief, Louis – to see 'which way the wind was blowing' (p. 221). Cinematic echoes aside, Lawler's careful reconstruction of the tangled political relationship between British, Free French and Vichy forces in the Gold Coast and in West Africa more generally is one of the most rewarding aspects of the book. While British administrators, military officers and covert agents tended to view the Free French (as well as each other) with deep suspicion, their relationship with neighbouring Vichy regimes was often very amicable. Indeed, 'fraternization' with the putative enemy was actively encouraged in some quarters, while British propagandists were reluctant to upset the established racial hierarchy by turning the natives of French West Africa against their colonial masters.

The book is rather less successful in locating its narrative in the broader currents of African history. It tends to take a rather rosy, uncritical view of the loyal response of Gold Coasters to the imperial war effort, a view that is contradicted by figures which show that by late 1943, desertions from the 7th (Ashanti) Battalion of the Gold Coast Regiment stood at a staggering 42 per cent. Moreover, despite all the political intrigue, the threatened Vichy invasion never really looked like

coming. The truth is that once the Takoradi (and later Accra) re-supply route was up and running, not a lot actually happened in terms of the war in the Gold Coast. The one and only success of the whispering campaign by the SOE and Free French intelligence, *Gyamanhene* Kwadwo Agyeman's decision in early 1942 to move himself and some one thousand followers across the border from Côte d'Ivoire to the Gold Coast – although here described as 'one of the most enterprising coups de théâtre of the Gold Coast's war' (p. 217) – went largely unnoticed outside the frontier kingdom of Gyaman itself. With the Allied invasion of North Africa and the French West African abandonment of Vichy in November 1942, the story ends. As an account of high politics and covert operations in the period 1940–2, this book will not be bettered. A full analysis of the social, economic and political impact of the conflict on the peoples of the Gold Coast, however, remains to be written.

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JOHN PARKER

## THE RESURRECTION OF CHIEFTAINCY

doi:10.1017/S0021853705371337

*Le retour des rois: les autorités traditionnelles et l'État en Afrique contemporaine.*

Edited by CLAUDE-HÉLÈNE PERROT and FRANÇOIS-XAVIER FAUVELLE-AYMAR.

Paris: Editions Karthala, 2003. Pp. 568. €32 (ISBN 2-84586-343-8).

KEY WORDS: Chieftaincy, postcolonial.

Thirty years ago very few if any Africanist scholars would have predicted that chieftaincy, beyond a scatter of colourful but empty rituals and the memories of the elderly, would survive into the twenty-first century. The nationalist movements that triumphantly became the governments of independent African states while making much of the heroic past were most assuredly not in business to restore the real or imaginary descendants of the figures who had dominated that past – kings, queens, chiefs and priests. Built into most anti-colonial ideology were radical commitments to modernization and a pronounced antipathy to anything other than democracy and meritocracy. And many nationalist parties had been engaged in long-drawn-out struggles with those individuals and institutions very frequently stigmatized as 'feudal', as profoundly conservative and as being essentially colonial creations. The relatively recent emergence of new manifestations of chieftaincy in modern administrative structures in areas dominated by profoundly radical movements such as Mozambique or post-apartheid South Africa would have seemed literally incredible to most observers a generation ago. The contributors to this large collection of essays try to produce some explanations for the remarkable rehabilitation of ideas and institutions which a generation ago seemed to have lost not only power but also credibility and functional significance.

In many respects it is the fine introductory chapter by Claude-Hélène Perrot which proves to be the most exciting of the 34 chapters. While it struggles to pull together a diverse collection of essays, it does bring out common themes and particularities; and it is, unlike rather too many of the other chapters, critically aware of what is becoming a large comparative literature in English as well as in French on the resurrection of chiefs and chieftaincy. And in common with some but sadly not all of the other contributors, she brings out the importance of seeing chieftaincies, in all their many forms as both institutions and ideologies, over a long

period of time. What is happening now is inexplicable without an understanding of what happened then.

Unsurprisingly the collection is strongly weighted down with West African examples. 21 of the 34 contributors write about Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo; and even an intriguing tail-end essay looking at three films about kingship is rooted in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Of the rest, only one essay is generalist and historiographical: Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch provides an inventory of published and unpublished French works – 885 of them – on chieftaincy, a breakdown which further emphasizes the dominance of a West African focus in this corpus. Consequently the collection is relatively thinner on east and especially southern Africa. That comment however does no justice to the quality of some of those essays. Readers will be grateful, for example, for three fine pieces on modern Madagascar – all too frequently ignored – by Françoise Raison-Jourde and Solofo Randrianja, by Suzanne Chazan-Gillig and by Marie-Pierre Ballarin. Gèrard Prunier's and Henri Médard's two essays on Uganda and Émile Mworoha's and Jean-Pierre Chrétien's jointly authored essay on Burundi are similarly valuable contributions. The collection is rounded off by a not-entirely satisfactory but long – 28 pages – bibliography. Given the West African focus the omission of J. D. Y. Peel's *magnum opus* of 2000 and of Olufemi Vaughan's and Ruth Watson's books are only examples of the eccentricity of this list.

As is the case with all collections, there are strong and weak contributions. But the value of this volume emerges from reading such a wide range of examples. These leave no one in any doubt that each of the case studies exhibits its own particularity and that many of the examples are more than merely dissimilar, they are actually dissonant. But there is also a cluster of common problems. What, for example, explains the timing of what is a fairly widespread *retour des rois*? What do we know about real rather than orchestrated popular responses to these purported restorations? Was hostility to chiefs, the engine of so much rural mobilization in the terminal colonial period, generated only by assumptions of the close association of colonial rule and chieftaincy? And should we not all be as acutely uncomfortable with invocations of 'authenticity' in Africa as we are with other essentialist ideas elsewhere? Ultimately whilst reading this collection the oldest and crudest political question, *qui bono* kept asserting itself; it is a disquieting question and one that was not always answered.

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RICHARD RATHBONE

## THE WHITE SIDE OF THE TRANSITION

doi:10.1017/S0021853705381333

*Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid: South Africa and World Politics.*

By ADRIAN GUELKE. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Pp. xvii + 248. \$75 (ISBN 0-333-9812-7); £18.99/\$24.95, paperback (ISBN 033-98123-5).

KEY WORDS: South Africa, apartheid, international relations.

Palgrave Macmillan are creating an intriguing new series in which authors are enabled to 'rethink' a whole range of major world political events. This volume by Adrian Guelke is the only one so far to have African content. His rethink is neatly summed up in a fairly short list of propositions. In historical sections, he considers

whether the roots of apartheid lie in the Afrikaner frontier or the British industrial tradition, whether apartheid led on fairly directly from segregation and whether its roots were essentially colonial or totalitarian. He also signals different positions on whether apartheid followed a visible blueprint more or less planned from the start. The second half of the book, much more of a running narrative, looks at the course of apartheid history and the literature on its demise.

The author's historical line follows fairly easily from the revisionist school led by Wolpe and Legassick who, from the 1970s, examined the importance of British settlers and the British imperial state in the making of segregation and fingered the central role of the mine-owner influenced Lagden Commission of 1903–5 in the Reconstruction period. With the Mineral Revolution, the liberal elements in British colonial thinking tended to fall away. The links to colonial practice are obvious and strong – here he might have used Mamdani, although he refers to earlier historical studies of Natal 'native policy'. Totalitarian analysis of apartheid, however convenient it may have been for anti-apartheid propaganda, tends to dissolve on a closer look. Hannah Arendt is given a polite dismissal here. Guelke prefers process to theory in understanding history and, at his best, skillfully combines broader points of analysis with clear narrative. Contingency and resistance also play an important part in the changing context of apartheid, for instance the sports boycott, on which Guelke provides some detail.

This combination of the contingent with the structural marks the second part of the book too. Guelke likes the Merle Lipton thesis which saw industrial capital as eventually creating social circumstances that doomed apartheid and he makes the very valuable point that it was precisely apartheid South Africa's integration into the West, rather than its isolation, which created the big contradictions. He is also interested in placing a range of international forces in the array of pressures that led to President F. W. de Klerk's 1990 declaration.

Guelke makes the Arend Lijphart consociational thesis into something of an analytical butt and he is right that, whatever delusions some National Party stalwarts may have had, the provisional constitution created at Kempton Park in 1993 really ruled consociationalism out for good. He takes into account a number of factors on why de Klerk failed to use what General George Meiring, the last white military chief, called his 'strong base', overwhelming armed superiority, once he realized that a white controlling veto would be impossible to attain in negotiations and represented an unacceptable position for Western democracies.

It is indeed on the white side of the transition that Guelke is strongest and in fact the book is overwhelmingly a study in white politics. He considers only briefly the other side of the coin, why the ANC adopted such relatively conservative economic policies. If unconvinced by the reasoning of radical critics, he does not systematically propose an alternative approach to such as Hein Marais or Patrick Bond. If there is a need to rethink black politics and the black-run state post-1994, Guelke barely begins this process with a few thoughts on continuity from the apartheid era. He is certainly right to note the importance of so many black homeland functionaries being fitted into the national post-apartheid bureaucracy.

This is not a particularly original book but it is clearly and gracefully written. Especially apposite is the way Guelke juxtaposes South African official racial ideology to the changing historical 'common sense' of Western liberalism over time. Guelke's overriding point, that South African historians tend to ignore international factors, is important. This readable volume would be very useful as a stimulating teaching device, particularly for students outside South Africa, to be read just following a standard history of the country.

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BILL FREUND

THE UNITED STATES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
IN AFRICA

doi:10.1017/S002185370539133X

*U.S. Policy in Postcolonial Africa: Four Case Studies in Conflict Resolution.* By F. UGBOAJA OHAEBULAM. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. Pp. xvi + 280. \$32.95, paperback (ISBN 0-8204-7091-0).

KEY WORDS: Diplomacy, international relations, civil wars, war, Angola, Northeastern Africa, Rwanda, Western Sahara.

Once upon a time, the study of American policy towards the African continent was considered to be at best an obscure endeavour which usually resulted in elementary surveys of African politics and society. The paucity of serious research into US–Africa relations, especially when compared with European, Asian and Latin American studies throughout the Cold War period, contributed to misunderstandings and misrepresentations both inside and outside the Beltway. Emblematic of this outlook was *Inside Africa* by John Gunter (London, 1955), a renowned American journalist who sought to explain the continent to the American public, and did so through a narrative saturated with colonial reference points and exoticism. Though a few specific studies of US relations were produced in the years that followed, most notably regarding the problem of South Africa, serious analysis of US foreign policy and Africa remained a marginal activity. Even as late as the 1980s, the release of another American journalist's account of the continent, Sanford Ungar, was still held to be a significant scholarly contribution to US understanding of events there. It was only with Peter Schraeder's *United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (Cambridge, 1994) that we begin to see a comprehensive attempt to address this complex relationship through an academic prism that reflects an attempt to grapple with the whole spectrum of relations.

In this context, F. Ugboaja Ohaegbulam's book should be welcomed as both an addition to the gradually increasing literature and for its focus on a particular aspect of foreign policy, that is to say, conflict resolution. In this he builds upon the scholarship of a known participant-observer, William Zartman, whose book *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York, 1985) represents the most comprehensive attempt to analyse the conflicts in the region and propose solutions to (primarily) American policy makers. In addition to providing a general overview of US policy toward the region, Ohaegbulam tackles four specific case studies of US intervention, the Horn of Africa (1930s to 1993), Western Sahara (1975–2003), Angola (1975–2002) and Rwanda (1994).

One of the key strengths of his account is Ohaegbulam's willingness to investigate American engagement in conflict resolution across the Cold War/post-Cold War divide. This approach allows him to make comparisons that transcend that ideologically fueled era and go into the Clinton presidency, where most obvious legacies of fear of entanglement and definite lack of interest in African affairs are seen in the willingness to thwart action in Rwanda in 1994. The growing involvement of the US defence establishment, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, in setting the terms of American engagement on the continent is well recorded here. Welcome too is the critical eye that the author casts on different administrations' approaches to the dilemmas of local nationalism and global security considerations. The centrality of international institutions, in particular the United Nations and the Organization for African Unity (and its successor, the African Union), is emphasized and the complexity of operating in this multilateral environment is well portrayed.

The book has some shortcomings too. Perhaps most glaring is that it lacks a substantive conclusion summarizing, analyzing and reflecting on the main points. Overall, the narrative is not as well supported by citations as it should have been and one hopes that this does not reflect a lack of recognition of material out there, but rather a publisher's decision to reduce weighty footnotes. There is relatively little discussion of the role of interest groups in capturing US policy towards the region (Firestone on Liberia having been the classic case but there are contemporary examples in the oil industry and the Christian lobby in Sudan).

Today we are poised on the edge of a new period of deeper, albeit selective, US engagement with Africa driven primarily by the search for oil and terrorists. Ohaegbulam's book will help readers define that territory and analyse the consequences of American policy from an historical perspective.

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CHRIS ALDEN

## OVERVIEWS OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

doi:10.1017/S0021853705401334

*What Went Wrong with Africa: A Contemporary History*. By ROEL VAN DER VEEN. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2004. Pp. 398. €32.50/£19.99, paperback (ISBN 90-6832-548-5).

*History of Africa, IV: Contemporary Developments*. By HARRY GAILEY. Melbourne FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002. Pp. xii + 166. \$17.50, paperback (ISBN 1-57524-163-3).

KEY WORDS: Postcolonial, development, politics.

As this reviewer can testify, setting out to write the postcolonial history of an entire continent (even minus North Africa and the islands) is a daunting task. One constantly needs to balance the big picture with attention to regional and country specificity, as well as to weave together episodes and long-term processes. The chances are that no one reader will be entirely satisfied by the product and a majority of readers may feel distinctly dissatisfied. The authors of the two books under review therefore deserve every sympathy.

The texts could hardly be more different in their approach and execution. Gailey's is a slim volume which seeks to impart basic information on every country without much sense of an authorial voice running through it. It is in fact an addition to volume III which had been entitled *From 1945 to the Present* (1989). Rather than update the latter, Gailey decided to write a fourth volume to bring the story up to the current present. The author provides a short introduction which highlights some underlying developments which have shaped the recent history of the continent, such as the impact of HIV/AIDS, but from then onwards he considers each country in turn. This leaves limited scope for discussion of phenomena and institutions across national boundaries. Van der Veen, by contrast, provides a 400-page book which is thematically organized and selects examples as and when they seem appropriate. The author, whose experience of Africa comes from working in the Dutch Foreign Ministry, is distinctly opinionated and seeks to contribute to debates about the state of the African continent.

Readers are likely to find Van der Veen's the more satisfactory of the two. It is difficult to know quite what the target audience is for Gailey's contribution. The absence of any clear themes or arguments means that it is unlikely to be very



serviceable for students. On the other hand, there are too many inaccuracies to make it very dependable as a work of reference. The book is littered with typographical errors which render many names almost unrecognizable, and it is wrong about a lot of basic facts (including the date of the first Nigerian coup, the timing of Guinea-Bissau's independence and the ethnic makeup of Togo). Van der Veen's book is clearly intended to be read by students, development practitioners and policy-makers. It is not strictly speaking a work of history because the author does not give equal coverage to the entire post-independence period. The 1960s, which are of growing interest to academic historians, are skipped through relatively quickly and are interpreted in the light of the Cold War. By contrast, the text deals with the 1980s and 1990s in considerable detail. Again, the author does not try to cover areas of social history which might interest the academic historian. As the title suggests, Van der Veen is really seeking to explain why the history of development in Africa has been one of such abject failure.

Van der Veen begins by telling his readers that he wants to rehabilitate modernization theory. But it is only in the conclusion that it becomes entirely clear what he means. His contention is that there is a mismatch 'between state structures left behind by the departing colonial rulers and certain central features of Africa's political, economic and social culture' (p. 363). Colonialism, he argues, led to the implantation of an alien state which was converted to serve African logics after independence. He insists that Africa's plight cannot be explained by external factors and that an answer must be sought in 'pre-modern cultures' which were not seriously disturbed by colonialism. The essence of these cultures is that they are driven by political logics rather than economic rationality. Van der Veen even sticks his neck out and suggests that South Africa may be heading in the same direction as other countries to the north.

The overall argument draws on the insights of the likes of Chabal and Daloz. It is, however, repackaged in a more accessible form. The problem for this reviewer is that this pretty general explanation is not verifiable because it is not really historicized in a very overt fashion. Moreover, one is left wondering what to make of countries which have bucked the trend: are the cultures of Botswana, for example, governed by different logics to those of other parts of southern Africa? The most valuable sections of the book are actually those where the argument is momentarily forgotten and the author gets to grips with the recent record of economic failure and political breakdown. There are a number of important insights and priceless vignettes which are clearly derived from practical experience of working in the Foreign Ministry. These bring home many of the points raised in an effective fashion. The insider perspective is what makes this book a bit different.

However, there are two shortcomings which one cannot avoid mentioning. The first is that, like Gailey, Van der Veen is not entirely reliable on points of detail. To choose but one example, he suggests that Togo became independent in 1963 (not 1960) and implies that Eyadema's first coup took place in 1967 (not 1963) (p. 327). Bizarrely, he also seems to think that Zanzibar was still governed from Oman at the time of the revolution in 1964 (p. 33). The second problem, which diminishes its value as a student text, has to do with the tone which is sometimes overly disparaging. Although the author should not feel under pressure to write a positive account of failure, there are many occasions when he misses the chance to explore exceptions to the bleak picture he has presented. It also has to be said that ordinary Africans seldom appear as agents in their own right, being reduced for the most part to the hapless victims of venal regimes.

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PAUL NUGENT

## NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE

doi:10.1017/S0021853705411330

*The Battlefield: Algeria 1988–2002*. By HUGH ROBERTS. London: Verso Books, 2003. Pp. 402. £17 (ISBN 1-85984-684-X).

*A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. By MATTHEW CONNELLY. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. 400. No price given (ISBN 0-19-514513-5).

KEY WORDS: Algeria, independence wars, postcolonial.

The violence of contemporary Algeria has often seemed to defy any rational analysis. Similarly those who have tried to explain it have often resorted to lazy clichés, talking about the clash of polarized opposites such as secularists versus Islamists, army versus civilians or terrorists versus democrats. What has always set Hugh Roberts apart has been his ability to go beyond these stereotypes and for this reason *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988–2002* is a very important book which brings together a collection of his articles stretching from November 1987 to July 2002 published in books and journals ranging from *Mediterranean Politics* and *International Affairs* through to the *Journal of Algerian Studies* and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Significantly these articles do come together to make a coherent whole. Exploring the roots of the contemporary violence in a clear way he takes us through the twists and turns of post-independence Algeria. Indeed this is why Roberts has consistently been one of the most interesting commentators on contemporary Algeria because he comes from novel and innovative angles, thereby attacking conventional wisdoms, particularly those emanating from a French perspective. Thus French historians have traditionally seen the National Liberation Front (FLN) as Jacobin and Boumediene as a 'modern day' Algerian Napoleon. In contrast Roberts prefers to use an English point of comparison. So Boumediene is much closer to Cromwell. Likewise the contemporary Algerian dilemma is much akin to the Whig aristocracy post-1688 which was constantly preoccupied with the political handling of religion.

Overall Roberts is particularly expert on the complexities of the Kabyle issue. He is also very good at analysing the historic role of the army in Algerian politics which, although undoubtedly the powerbroker of the regime, is riven with divisions. However, his most important point, the one that unites the book and gives it a sense of direction, is that Algeria has to be understood in terms of Algerian history and traditions. Too often in the past, Roberts rightly argues, Algeria has been seen through the prism of France or the Middle East and this is a fatal mistake. In this sense Roberts is expert in exploding myths. Take the view that Algeria is an Arab-Islamic country, one of the most basic claims of the post-independence regime. This, Roberts reminds us, is completely unhistorical because it ignores the Roman, Jewish and French components of Algeria's social and cultural history, as well as the Ottoman and especially the Berber elements which continue to survive in varying degrees to this day. Equally Berberism is shot through with myths and fabrication because it conveniently forgets that large parts of traditional Kabyle culture are of Arab-Islamic origin, notably the Kabyle vocabulary of politics and honour.

Whilst Roberts focuses on the new Algerian conflict Matthew Connelly's *A Diplomatic Revolution* offers new perspectives on the first Algerian War 1952–62. Drawing on archives from America, France and Algeria he has set Algeria firmly within the context of the Cold War. In doing so he underlines the limitations of a Franco-Algerian perspective.

Connelley's main thesis is that the Algerian War was a prophetic event because at the height of superpower confrontation the Franco-Algerian conflict, characterized as it was by the inequality of North and South, the emergence of Third Worldism and the pluralism of international politics, was a harbinger of the post-Cold War and post-colonial world. In this sense Connelley's book is a very important study which must be seen as part of a new wave of scholarship which, along with the work of Irwin Wall and Martin Thomas, has gone beyond the national perspective and properly understood the Algerian War as an *international* event in twentieth-century world history.

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MARTIN EVANS

## A CHALLENGE TO PESSIMISM ON NIGERIA

doi:10.1017/S0021853705421337

*Troubled Journey: Nigeria since the Civil War.* Edited by LEVI A. NWACHUKU and G. N. UZOIGWE. Dallas: University Press of America, 2004. Pp. xxviii + 338.

No price given (ISBN 0-7618-2712-9).

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, postcolonial.

This collection of essays on Nigeria's contemporary history covers the period from the beginning of the civil war in 1966 to the return of civil rule in 1999. Although its title seems to suggest that the book belongs to the growing literature on the political pathology of Nigeria, actually it dissents from the general pessimism that pervades much of recent discussions on Nigeria. The chief strength of the book comes from the intellectual boldness of its authors to challenge the negative consensus on Nigeria's past, its present and its future. This strength, however, is nearly lost in the midst of many weaknesses afflicting the book.

There are two introductory chapters by the editors. In the first, Uzoigwe gives an overview of Nigeria's history from the Stone Age to independence from British colonialism in 1960. Uzoigwe stresses a major contention common among Nigerian historians that although contemporary Nigeria came into being as a British colony only in the early twentieth century, the histories of the various peoples inhabiting the area form a basic geographic and historical unity, and that 'Nigerians had always had a lot in common in spite of their obvious differences; that they always interacted broadly and diffusedly ... [and] that they had influenced one another over the centuries'. For Uzoigwe, these facts make Nigeria more than a mere by-product of British colonialism (p. 12). Given the contentiousness of these assertions, the supporting argument should have been more vigorous. In the second introductory chapter, Nwachuku surveys Nigeria's history since independence, highlighting some of the major themes addressed in the rest of the book, including internal political developments, economic and social changes as well as Nigeria's relations with the rest of the world. Chapters 3 through 11 are written by different authors, hence there are discernible variations not only in tone and style but also in the quality of analysis. Each chapter is focused on the reign of a ruler, providing insights into the particularities of the various regimes that have governed Nigeria with varying consequences; additionally, the achievements and failures of each ruler become easier to understand. The interpretation that unfolds from the chapters collectively is: the vision of a potentially great country that heralded Nigeria's independence has been progressively undermined by the series of poor leaders that have misruled the country so much that by the end of the

twentieth century, the vision of a great Nigeria was nearly lost completely. To this extent, the book shares the pessimism common to contemporary literature on Nigeria. However, the editors keep emphasizing in both their introductory and concluding remarks that the much predicted demise of Nigeria is premature, for Nigeria is always a work in progress. In the concluding chapter, Uzoigwe insightfully analyzes what he terms the paradoxes of Nigeria's contemporary history, namely: 'Unitarianism versus federalism, republicanism versus monarchism, national identity versus ethnic identity, secularity versus theocracy, enormous resources versus great poverty, high expectations versus poor performance' (p. 283). If these themes had been used to organize the discussions by each of the authors, the book would have had greater intellectual coherence. As already noted, calling attention to how these paradoxes have at once strengthened and weakened Nigeria as a modern state is the chief strength of this volume.

Among the weaknesses of the volume is that focusing on the regimes of individual rulers obscures some of the continuities of programs, policies and personnel that carry over from one regime to the next. A more serious weakness is that all the chapters rely unduly on newspaper articles and popular magazines, and citations of peer-reviewed periodical literature are very few. There are no citations of primary sources in the form of the personal papers or the official records of the individual rulers discussed. It is not clear why not even one of the surviving ex-heads of state (Gowon, Obasanjo, Shagari, Buhari, Babangida, Shonekan and Abubakar) was interviewed. Perhaps as a result of too much reliance on current newspapers and popular magazines, all the chapters tend to reproduce uncritically the partisan perspectives of contemporary political discourses in Nigeria, particularly the gratuitous accusation of 'the Muslim Northerners' as the source of all the problems afflicting contemporary Nigeria, and the clamor of being 'marginalized' that is quite common among the politicians belonging to Igbo ethnic group. Clearly, these flaws detract from the overall academic quality of the analyses presented in this book.

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## LIBERATION WITHOUT LIBERTY?

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*The Historical Dimensions of Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe*, II: *Nationalism, Democracy and Human Rights*. Edited by TERENCE RANGER. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2003 (distributed outside Africa by African Books Collective, Oxford). Pp. 196. No price given (ISBN 1-7792-001-3).

KEY WORDS: Zimbabwe, democracy, human rights, nationalism.

Terence Ranger's introduction to this collection stands on its own as an important contribution to Zimbabwean historiography as he expresses the difficult soul searching he and others face when confronting the past through the current crisis in Zimbabwe. As a participant in the mass nationalism of the early 1960s, Ranger reflects on how he and so many others in Rhodesia, 'firmly believed that a nationalist victory would achieve full democracy' (p. 1). The question from the year 2000, as expressed in a quote from Dr. Nkosana Moyo, became "'why do we find ourselves with so much violence in a system meant to have removed coercive violence?'" (p. 1). Ranger's introduction and the individually authored chapters

that follow succeed in answering this historian's dilemma. By exploring the fault lines where the rhetorical promises of greater democracy and freedom met with the realities of party loyalty and sacrifice, this collection suggests that the democratic aspirations of urban trade unionists, rural community leaders and women's groups were all cut short by 'the sword of violent agencies' that the new government 'had inherited from the past – party youth, ex-combatants, the army' (p. 18). To discuss the contents of this collection, I find it useful to divide them into three sub themes: urban-centered elite politics (McCracken, Raftopoulos, Dashwood); the politics of the Zimbabwean military (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, Chitiyo, Alexander and McGregor); and rural community and labor politics (Alexander and McGregor, Mtisi).

John McCracken makes the point that African nationalism in Malawi quickly became devoid of the liberalism expressed by its founding intellectuals. He shows how Dunduzu Chisiza, the Malawian economist and nationalist politician who had been influential in Salisbury as well, had hoped that the new state would show "respect for the dignity of the human individual and the sanctity of his personality" (p. 49). Zimbabwean scholars need to return to similar debates over democracy and human rights in the early 1960s to help locate the roots of the current authoritarian state. Brian Raftopoulos's chapter on trade union autonomy and democratization does this by examining where the future autocratic state project sprouted roots in the nationalist party's campaigns to control the independent trade union movement. Raftopoulos shows that while the subsequent 'victory' of the nationalist faction may have managed to redirect international funding to the nationalists, it did not help to stop the splintering of unions into less effective smaller unions. Hevena Dashwood's chapter on the impact of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) is a refreshing interpretation of how ESAP became a tool of the ruling elite further to entrench their economic power at the cost of programs for the poor and development more generally. Rather than ascribe the ESAP of the early 1990s as a cause of the current crisis through the workings of Western neo-liberalism, Dashwood shows how the credible aspects of the program were not permitted to work because of elite class interests.

The chapters in the collection concerning the structure of the military both during the liberation war and after Independence are both innovative and vital given the lack of historical research on this topic to date. Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi challenges the essentialist notion of women's participation in the liberation war as part and parcel of a women's liberation struggle. Sexual violence against women, discriminatory practices and the failure to recognize women as effective combatants until relatively late in the war were all factors limiting the liberating effect of women's participation, and all of these elements led to a post-war backlash against female ex-combatants. T. K. Chitiyo's chapter on the Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) participation in Mozambique from 1982–91 is also a stimulating addition to the overall theme of the collection, detailing the difficulties the ZNA had in maintaining its mission in Mozambique and how the increasing costs of intervention became a debated domestic political issue by the late 1980s. The subsequent lack of transparency in the governments' handling of the ZNA corruption charges helped to create a climate of impunity among the political and military elites by the 1990s.

Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor's chapter on rural institutions in Matebeleland North after Independence combines the military and rural community themes quite well. They explore the post-war difficulties of reintegrating ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) ex-combatants and the Fifth Brigade's notorious killings in Nkayi and Lupane. The subsequent failures of the

local ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) community politics and ex-combatants to protect the population from the Zanu-PF controlled state and military meant that after 1985, 'people greeted attempts at development with great suspicion and non-cooperation' (pp. 123–4). The culmination of these attacks on local democratic decision-making is shown in another chapter by Alexander and McGregor on community protests against the Gwampa Valley Campfire program introduced in Nkayi and Lupane districts in the mid-1990s. The 'top down' implementation of the Campfire program represented to local people their lack of democratic rights in a country they had fought to create. The appendix includes a short play about the Campfire debate by Shylock B. Mathiya. The play, like many of the chapters, serves as a useful teaching tool.

Joseph Mtisi's chapter on the growing disillusionment expressed by plantation workers at the Jersey Tea Estate in Chipinge district brings together many of the issues and problems of how the rising expectations of greater rights and freedoms associated with the liberation struggle were not obtainable by tea pickers. Mtisi shows that while the rights of workers have improved since independence, the continuing arbitrary power of the estate's foremen has meant that little has changed in the production process. Workers remain fearful of arbitrary dismissals and female workers in particular are treated poorly by certain foremen. It is difficult to resist reading the plight of the tea plantation workers as a metaphor for Zimbabweans more generally, as the hard-earned liberation of the country has failed to alter fundamentally the relations of power between leaders and led. This fine collection of specific historical research and Ranger's useful introduction opens new insights and suggests important areas of research that will help both to understand the current crisis and to provide ways to rethink a more democratic future.

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TIM SCARNECCHIA

## TRUE FICTIONS

doi:10.1017/S002185370544133X

*Voices of the Poor in Africa: Moral Economy and the Popular Imagination.*

By ELIZABETH ISICHEI. Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002.

Pp. ix + 287. £50/\$75 (ISBN 1-58046-107-7).

KEY WORDS: moral economy, popular culture.

In this book, Elizabeth Isichei offers a history of what might be termed African folk epistemologies. Having written important historical surveys of African society and Christianity in Africa, Isichei brings her synthetic skills to bear on recent scholarship that confronts and interprets fantastic beliefs such as vampires, water spirits, cannibals, shape-shifters and magic money. Isichei classifies these phenomena as 'True Fictions', symbolic narratives that encapsulate historical insights. Her goal is to recover this cognitive history or 'alternative universe of myth and symbol' (p. 32), and she proposes that this realm of inquiry be recognized and added as another important variable in African history.

The book is divided into two parts, the first covering Africans' interpretive responses to the Atlantic slave trade, and the second a collection of essays surveying African beliefs that have flourished in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Isichei traces a cognitive history of the Atlantic slave trade dominated by rumours of white cannibal slavers, zombie slaves and cowrie shells that feed on slaves. She



tells this story through vignettes covering an enormous span of time and space, and concludes that themes of displacement and extraction feature as mythic complexes that long survive the commodifying experience of the slave trade itself. The second part explores, in episodic manner, how widespread phantasmas such as vampires and leopard men emerged 'out of a vision of moral economy rooted in witchcraft beliefs, and an understanding of life as a zero-sum game' (p. 112). It also surveys African appropriations of Western consumer goods such as cars and clothes, deep-seated idioms of power such as 'eating the state' and the identification of European technological strength with secrecy and sorcery. Isichei introduces her material through a staccato style of writing and impressionist method of argument. The result is a wonderfully accessible book, but one that is unable to acknowledge the variations in context in which such 'True Fictions' arise. The series of essays on zombies, vampires, witches and magic money cohere thematically, but give only rough impressions of where, when and in what intensity such beliefs have flourished, let alone how they may have changed over time. As a work of synthesis, the book serves as a sort of encomium to many guild historians of Africa, and is mostly reluctant to enter into historiographical frays that might have otherwise sharpened its interpretive framework.

The analytical hallmark of *Voices of the Poor in Africa* is its blending of Foucauldian attention to what Isichei terms 'subjugated knowledges' with a soft cultural Marxist concern about African sensibilities towards maintaining a 'moral economy' in the face of Western encroachments. There is something unsatisfactory about the resulting structure, which tends to pit on the one side an authentic African poor who grapple with external change through a popular culture defined by fantastic but socially aware beliefs, and on the other a Western colonial or Westernized postcolonial elite who view such beliefs through the condescending lens of 'rationality'. This is a flat model of African social structure for any era, and one that takes little account of omnipresent chains of patron-client relations. Despite the book's title, the African rich speak the same language of 'subjugated knowledges' as the poor. Isichei begins her book with the now-famous aphorism of Paul Biya, who distinguished rumor from truth by declaring that 'Truth comes from above; rumor comes from below'. This is an unfortunate point of departure, for whatever discursive monopolies the colonial and postcolonial states have sought, few African leaders can have afforded to ignore folk understandings of power or circuits of rumour. Parallel rivalries between patron-client networks have similarly inhabited and employed 'subjugated knowledges' such as witchcraft accusations against one another. The popular sensibility of the economy as a zero-sum game is indeed prevalent throughout much of Africa, but it is a universal language that spans social strata, binding rich and poor together.

By treating folk epistemologies as 'True Fictions', Isichei imposes a literary tidiness upon these phantasmas. She asserts that beliefs in water spirits, magic money, zombies and the like are principally forms of social criticism, indictments by the African poor on the powerful who may have captured their actions but not their thoughts. Yet by glossing fantastic beliefs as metaphors reflecting social relations, Isichei does not account for why many people really *believe* in such things as vampires, and why they genuinely *fear* what such creatures can do. Also omitted is the long and considerable history of African skepticism towards such 'True Fictions' themselves, and the skeptics' anger towards the cynical manipulations that lay behind many rumour scares. The stakes in the popular acceptance of these 'True Fictions' are as important for school teachers and development planners as they are for witchcraft eradicators and peddlers of prosperity theology. These criticisms aside, the book serves as a useful overview for this vein of African historiography concerned with the more fantastic cultural responses to European



intrusions. It joins other recent contributions, such as Stephen Ellis and Gerrieter Harr's *Worlds of Power*, that place belief systems of African societies at the centre of future research agendas. Few other works bring together such an exciting variety of beliefs which span the continent, and students unfamiliar with African folk epistemologies will greatly benefit from Isichei's labours of synthesis and interpretation. And the book is eminently accessible in its prose, if not in its price.

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## THE POLITICS OF DRESS

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*Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*. Edited by JEAN ALLMAN. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. Pp. vi + 248. \$50 (ISBN 0-253-34415-8); \$21.95, paperback (ISBN 0-253-21689-3).

KEY WORDS: Colonial, postcolonial, clothes, culture, social, African modernities.

'Clothing matter and dress is political', declares Phyllis Martin in the conclusion to this collection. That very much sums up the overall argument of the volume, which insists that fashion is an important element of African life, and that fashion decisions reflect assumptions about, and challenges to, power. I am not sure that this contention is as strikingly novel as the book suggests, but should anyone have been inclined to dispute it there is ample evidence of the point here. There are some very nice contributions, and most effective are those which explore women's fashion in the context of the gender politics and development aspirations of the postcolonial state. Karen Tranberg Hansen and Andrew Ivaska both discuss the great miniskirt debate of the later 1960s and 1970s, and the state hostility and male violence (often sexual violence) which the mini provoked. Such responses, they suggest, revealed the uncertainties of the project of modernization; Tranberg Hansen points to the resurgence of the mini issue in the 1990s. Jean Allman explores the Ghanaian state's campaign to 'dress' – that is, to change the ideas of nakedness among – women in the north. Men had been conquered, and clothed, by the colonial state; but women had maintained their own ideas of dress. As Allman implies, official campaigns on this were clumsy, and somehow missed a basic point – that women's nakedness was a function of their political and economic subordination. She argues that it was women's increasingly effective claim on household resources from the 1970s which ultimately clothed them – not Nkrumah's fulminations on the need for national decency.

The availability of fashion as a resource for innovation, and challenge to established power, is a consistent theme of the book. But the suggestion, made in the introduction here, that fashion can be read as part of 'Black struggles for freedom and independence' is troublingly simple. Not that it is in itself inaccurate – as is clear enough from Marissa Moorman's account of Angola's urban populace out-cooling their Portuguese colonial masters with some seriously bling medallions, and challenging their subordination with all-night dancing parties. But is this analysis enough? When Yoruba women denounced the wearing of Fante wrappers as 'inauthentic', or Sani Abacha swapped his khaki uniform for a tazarce gown,

were these struggles for freedom? Dress may, as Laura Fair suggests here of early twentieth-century Zanzibar, help to fashion shared identities. But it may also serve to exclude and subordinate. And more importantly, there is a basic tension in the argument of the book. Clothing is laden with cultural significance, and can evoke and manifest in daily life a wider world of power – that is why it is so important. Yet it seems to be argued here that the appropriation of clothing may allow its significance to be easily refashioned – as though one set of significances and associations can fall swiftly and wholly away to be replaced by another. While the introduction makes perfunctory reference to the Comaroffs, none of the contributors explicitly engage with the thorny questions of hegemony and cultural practice which are concealed under clothing, and there is not much here to extend our understanding of the moral and cultural worlds of those two stock characters of colonial analysis, the man in trousers and the man in the blanket. Allman's piece, instructive as it is as a study of the rhetoric of the clothed possessors of postcolonial power, says surprisingly little about the nature of the clothing decisions made by northern Ghanaian women, and how these related to a particular sense of identity and cultural propriety. Part of the problem is one of evidence. Though the introduction to this book boldly asserts the historical value of 'the archives of dress and clothing', there are no such archives; our knowledge is very fragmentary and is shaped by those moments of debate over clothing which have made their way in to the written and photographic record, and into the rhetoric of the powerful. Yes, dress is political; but is its power so easily donned and doffed?

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JUSTIN WILLIS

## AFRICAN ETHNOGRAPHY IN A BREMEN MUSEUM

doi:10.1017/S0021853705461332

*Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica im Uebersee-Museum Bremen 1841–1945.* By BETTINA VON BRISKORN. Pp. 335. Bremen: Uebersee-Museum, 2000. €10 (ISBN 3-929439-57-3).

KEY WORDS: Museums and memorials, material culture, Ghana, Togo.

Museums of anthropology and culture can be as important as archives for historians researching on Africa. The objects they preserve, and their documentation, can offer pegs for chronology and materials for good qualitative research in our source-starved field. Ms von Briskorn's study of the history of the Africa holdings (which include materials from Egypt) in the Uebersee-Museum in Bremen is a trenchant specimen of 'collection history'. But while it whets our appetite for more historical evaluation of this body of material, it also makes clear how complicated it can be gaining an insight into a collection at the operational research level of individual objects or individual collectors.

The Uebersee-Museum is the latest manifestation of a collecting tradition in Bremen whose earliest documented Africa holdings date back to the 1840s. At first this collectors' concern with Africa was concentrated in private societies, including the Bremen Mission. In 1878, however, the holdings of a private Anthropological Commission, which had organized the first anthropological exhibition in the city in 1872, were transferred to municipal ownership, and in 1896 the city's Museum for Natural History, Anthropology and Trade was founded (the strong commercial

element being a reflection not only of the city's involvement in trade, but also of the influence of the London Colonial Exhibition of 1886). Intervention on the part of the political authorities by no means guaranteed the collection's smooth development, however. Leaving aside the major upheavals of the Nazi years and the Second World War there is a curious episode during the German colonial period in which the new nation state tried to concentrate collecting in respect of African anthropology in Berlin. The museum in Bremen was, for some years, supposed to accept no new acquisitions which were not duplicates of objects already held in the Berlin Museum of Anthropology. One response to this was that the Bremen museum encouraged missionaries to send in copies of Herero and Ovambo objects from Namibia – but missionaries and the museum were evidently aware that objects made for European display were of lower quality than those made for indigenous operational use.

Generalizations about the quality of the documentation of Africana in the Uebersee-Museum are evidently difficult to make. From the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century thematic indices and entry books run in parallel, but are not necessarily consistent with each other, or in themselves. A key figure in the design of new thematic indexes, S. A. Poppe, catalogued 1,700 objects in 12 months 1878–9 without special training – but quite evidently worked in terms which were interesting to the city's intellectuals in that period. If this framework and his striking rate make one sceptical about the quality of his work, however, this situation was undoubtedly better for historians of later generations than that in which 'large sections of the collection which arrived in the Museum's hands before 1914 were still not catalogued in 1933' (p. 48).

It is unfortunate that Ms von Briskorn did not have the opportunity to check her study of thematic indexes and entry books against the objects themselves. It seems that her work, which is mainly an edited and extended version of a Bremen University MA thesis, did not have the kind of status which would have assured her access to the collection's magazines. But this book nevertheless has important merits for the historian as researcher. It generalizes, as far as possible, about the way in which the collection came together, quantifies new accessions by year and stresses that deliberate collection via expeditions played a very restricted role in its history compared with the acquisition of objects from donors and suppliers. Its most evident strength is the 200-page alphabetical list of donors and suppliers described clearly according to a detailed schema, which includes the reference numbers of the objects each contributed. Looking at this through the spectacles of my own speciality I can say that following up donors who were also missionaries would of itself be more than a marginal contribution to the history of contact between the Bremen Mission and the inhabitants of its main mission field in the Ewe-speaking world. It seems quite plausible that a Museum's interest in missionaries as collectors may well have influenced the questions the missionaries posed to their societies in which they worked.

An Anglo-Swiss commentator may be allowed a laudatory comment in conclusion about Ms von Briskorn's refreshingly broad and European perspectives. She is inspired partly by the style of collection history pioneered at Leicester University. And she observes – even if only in a footnote – that the motto of the first anthropological exhibition in Bremen ('*Das eigentlich Studium der Menschheit ist der Mensch*') originates not, as was asserted in 1872 in Bremen, with J. W. von Goethe, but with an English poet, Alexander Pope ('The proper study of mankind is man'), whose intellectual property rights could evidently be ignored in that period of growing European nationalism.

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PAUL JENKINS

## SHORTER NOTICES

doi:10.1017/S0021853705471339

*Historical Dictionary of Egypt*. By ARTHUR GOLDSCHMIDT and ROBERT JOHNSTON.

Third edition. Lanham MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003. Pp. xxxviii + 510. £65 (ISBN 0-8108-4856-2).

KEY WORDS: Egypt, general, dictionaries.

This new edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Egypt* by Arthur Goldschmidt, an established historian, and Robert Johnston, a reference librarian with long experience in the Middle East, begins with a comprehensive introduction which places Egypt in its wider historical context from Alexander the Great to Husni Mubarak. The lexical part contains dozens of biographical entries on Egyptians and foreigners who played a role in Egypt's history. The historical development of Egypt is presented through well-documented entries on various Egyptian institutions, religious and political movements, newspapers and periodicals, relations with foreign powers etc. Because of the centrality of Egypt in the Middle East region one has the impression that this dictionary is also a historical guide to the whole region. Many of the subjects of articles are in fact parts of the history of the wider Islamic world, especially religious reform (Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Sayyid Qutb etc.), the Arab nationalist movement (leading Arabic periodicals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, prominent leaders such as Jamal Abd Al-Nasir) or the more recent political situation (the Arab–Israeli conflict, the Palestinian question, the Arab League and big power politics in the region). Egypt's African identity, though less prominent, finds expression through many entries, for example dealing with the Nile, the Nubians, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Pharaonic nationalism and the Coptic church.

The dictionary is also a mirror of the cultural life of a country which for the last century at least played a leading role in the whole Arab world and beyond. This role is made clear through the biographies of writers and poets, music composers and singers, movie actors and producers.

Finally, the authors have introduced to this third edition a comprehensive bibliography, a chronology of events and appendixes dealing with Egyptian weights and measures, old and new military ranks, as well as a useful listing of political leaders. All these features contribute to the quality of this dictionary as a valuable reference tool for everyone interested in one of the world's oldest countries and a melting pot of so many peoples and cultures.

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MOHAMED EL MANSOUR

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*Voyage to a Thousand Cares: Master's Mate Lawrence with the African Squadron, 1844–1846*. Edited by C. HERBERT GILLILAND. Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004. Pp. xiv + 334. \$27.95 (ISBN 1-59114-320-9).

KEY WORDS: Slave trade, text editions.

The sources for the history of the transatlantic slave trade are diverse and spread over archives in many countries, making it impossible for any one individual to trace and see all the relevant sources. Therefore, any effort to publish another of them and thereby make it available to the scholarly community is welcome. However, a source edition of poor quality provides an argument against this orthodoxy. This, in short, is the dilemma that confronts the reader of this text.

John C. Lawrence was master's mate on the US sloop *Yorktown* during its service in the American naval squadron for the suppression of the slave trade from West Africa, patrolling the coast between the Galinhas and Benguela. His journal (which is not complete, since a few pages at the beginning and the end of the original manuscript were missing) spans nearly 13 months, from 13 November 1844 to 7 December 1845. At the latter date, however, Lawrence was no longer on board of the *Yorktown*, but serving as one of the prize crew that took the *Pons*, a slave vessel captured by the *Yorktown* on 1 December 1845, with nearly 900 slaves from Cabinda, to Monrovia.

Despite this promising framework, however, the journal contains little information for historians interested in Africa or the suppression of the slave trade that is interesting or new, and in this respect pales before other published journals by naval officers, such as those of Horatio Bridge, F. E. Forbes or Sir Henry Huntley. Lawrence was neither a meticulous chronicler of his experiences nor particularly interested in the African societies and individuals that he encountered. His descriptions of coastal places are highly stereotyped and limited to the European buildings or the occasional African chief who is treated with ridicule. Even on the slave trade, there is little detail. His entries on the capture of the *Pons* are brief and once he joined the prize crew, he simply did not have the time to continue his journal. The main substance of his journal comprises descriptions of the shipboard routine and the main impression left by the book is of the tedium experienced by the naval crews, neatly summarized by Lawrence: 'Oh monotony thy name is coast of Africa' (p. 143).

As concerns the editing of the text, it should be noted that Gilliland is not a historian but a professor of English at an American naval academy. This explains the limitations of this edition, in particular its narrow focus on the American context and slight knowledge of the African societies mentioned in the text (illustrated most strikingly by his uncertainty about the locations of the Ivory and Gold Coasts, pp. 101–2, 105). In order to 'complete the story' (p. ix), Lawrence's text is supplemented with information from the logbook of the *Yorktown*, letters and journals of other naval officers and contemporary published accounts, this material being mainly interspersed in the text of the journal. Unfortunately, these editorial additions focus almost exclusively on the American naval squadron and American internal politics while ignoring the African context as well as the detailed process of the suppression of the slave trade. This narrow focus is also reflected in the bibliography, which lists only two works on the African coastal societies mentioned in the journal and omits some of the most important books on the suppression of the trade (the most striking absence being David Eltis's *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* [1987]), and even the journals of the British naval officers Forbes and Huntley.

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SILKE STRICKRODT

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*The First World War in Africa*. By HEW STRACHAN. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. x + 224. £8.99 (ISBN 0-19-925728-0).

KEY WORDS: War, colonial.

It is most useful for historians of Africa to have the section on the continent from Strachan's *The First World War – To Arms* (Oxford, 2001) available in this well-produced and inexpensive form. As Strachan makes clear, the text is largely

unaltered, although he has taken the opportunity to correct misprints as well as to alter some details, for example on the health of Germans in East Africa. In his helpful preface, Strachan indicates the importance of the war for the history of the continent, even suggesting that it ranked in impact with the slave trade. Strachan then offers an essentially operational account of the war in sub-Saharan Africa, organized by the German colony, with the difficulty of conquest explaining the ranking: thus the order, in reverse difficulty, is Togo, Cameroons, Namibia and Tanzania. The writing is good, the scholarship exemplary and there is a particularly deft interweaving of British, French and German sources. This is truly history from both sides of the hill. Other perspectives, such as the Spaniards in Muni, the Belgians, Portuguese and the South Africans are all considered. For example, the varied South African positions on the desirability of taking part in the war are all considered. The operational range of the study is most impressive, with a particularly valuable consideration of the logistical dimension. This leads to an instructive consideration of the need for porters and the factors that affected their recruitment and use. The heavy burden of the war emerges very clearly in this respect, with large numbers of porters dying, while recruitment itself was very disruptive. Strachan also demonstrates his theme that the war represented the last stage of the partition of Africa, and certainly led to an intensification of European control. The distribution of German territories did not always match military events. For example, French strategy in West Africa was designed to ensure that France gained more of the Cameroons than the extent of French operations justified. As Strachan shows, British concern to satisfy France ensured that this goal was realized: Africa serving to permit (by offsetting advantages) the furtherance of European goals.

The principal disappointment is that the promise of the preface is not realized, probably because the 'repackaging' of the chapters has not truly led to a new book. There is no systematic discussion of the impact of the war on sub-Saharan Africa, and no conclusion bringing together, for example, reflections on economic or political consequences. Instead, there is a disjuncture between the preface and the resolutely operational chapters that follow. Among the sections that would have been interesting is one pulling together the impact of the war and of the war economies on transport links, and also a systematic discussion of the conflict's impact on health and disease. It would, however, be inappropriate to close on a note of criticism. This is a first-rate study by a scholar who has successfully demonstrated the global nature of the conflict.

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JEREMY BLACK

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*Colonialism and Economic Change in Swaziland, 1940–1960.* By HAMILTON SIPHO SIMELANE. Kampala: JANyeko Publishing Centre, and Manzini: JAN Publishing Centre, 2003. Pp. x+231. £23.95/\$39.95 (ISBN 9970-510-04-9). Distributed by African Book Collective, Oxford.

KEY WORDS: Swaziland, colonial, economic.

The publishing history of this book is a study in itself. Based on the author's Toronto Ph.D. thesis, and modified by his early years of teaching at the University of Swaziland, the manuscript was prepared for publication by the Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies in Harare. Publication was 'frustrated by Zimbabwe's economic collapse', and was eventually taken up by an academic colleague who published it simultaneously in Uganda and Swaziland.

The result is a book that is a useful undergraduate text for the study of Swaziland history, but which shows its age in terms of scholarship. The first two chapters set up an argument around the conflicting views of Lewis Gann and Walter Rodney on colonialism, and raise the vital question of land alienation and redemption that dominates the twentieth-century political history of Swaziland. The third chapter brings in the large-scale agro-capitalism (forestry, irrigated sugar and, later, pineapples) that was introduced into Swaziland by the British imperial regime in the 1940s – but which proved to be more integrated into the colonial South African regional economy than with the British economy. This is followed by chapters on mining (notably asbestos and iron ore); on the agro-industries or mills that processed wood, sugar and fruit; and a chapter on labour relations and labour militancy in fields and factories. The study, based largely on primary documentation in the Swaziland National Archives and the Public Record Office in London, arbitrarily ends in 1960, presumably on the basis of a twenty-five- or thirty-year access rule at the time of original research.

The dread phrase ‘dual economy’ once commonplace in analyses of the Swaziland economy is not used once in the book. The new centres of capitalist production are instead seen as ‘mini-metropolises’ sucking human and natural resources from their peripheries. The main emphasis is on the period of the Second World War, as the turning-point which transformed Swaziland as a whole from a ‘backward’ labour reserve into ‘modern’ capitalist production.

Hamilton Simelane has pursued his interest in the Second World War and its aftermath in a number of articles published since this book was written, but these are not included in the book’s comprehensive twenty-page bibliography, which contains no work published after 1989. As a scholarly text *Colonialism and Economic Change in Swaziland* has definite limitations. Besides taking into account some more recent economic theory, it would have been useful for the book to have taken us, if not to the death of King Sobhuza II in 1982, then at least to national independence in 1968. The reader who seeks to understand Swaziland’s economic and social history since 1960 has to turn to more contentious works such as Richard Levin’s *When the Sleeping Grass Awakens: Land and Power in Swaziland* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997) which takes its readers into the reign of the present king and promotes the agenda of radical student politicians.

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NEIL PARSONS

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*Land, Gender and the Periphery: Themes in the History of Eastern and Southern Africa*. Edited by BAHRU ZEWEDE. Addis Ababa: OSSREA, 2003. Pp. vi + 178. £19.95, paperback (ISBN 0-954538420).

KEY WORDS: Eastern Africa, southern Africa, postcolonial, economic, social.

This collection on themes in eastern and southern African history has been put together from papers presented by regional scholars at a conference in Addis Ababa in 2001. As a result, it is a mixed bag of individual contributions without much internal coherence. The papers vary in quality and general interest, and most deal with the recent past. Eight deal with southern Africa, from Zambia to Botswana, and the other three with Ethiopia and Uganda. The editor has grouped them into sections on gender and education, women and production, land tenure – and one paper on the otherwise little-known Goma of the Ethiopian–Sudanese borderlands. Mulanga has produced a very useful synopsis of undergraduate



research papers at the University of Zambia. Shimelis's paper on Kistane (Gurage) urban migration has some interesting points to make about how and why women came to town. Sikhondze looks at gendered struggles over food production for the post-war market in Swaziland. Nyambara's study of land acquisition in a 'communal' area of Zimbabwe since Independence raises some very interesting questions about the concepts of 'collective', 'communal' and 'customary' as applied to land tenure and argues that an informal land market has always existed in 'communally' held areas, thus making private accumulation and differentiation both possible and likely. Odoi-Tanga carries the story of cotton production in the Padhola area of eastern Uganda up to the present and shows that while colonial compulsion was relatively successful post-colonial compulsion has not been, with the result that Uganda's cotton production has declined continuously since the 1960s. Overall, the collection is a useful one, but more suited to an Africana library than to the individual collection.

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RICHARD WALLER

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*Origins of Rwandan Genocide*. By JOSIAS SEMUJANGA. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003. Pp. 265. \$35 (ISBN 1-59102-053-0).

KEY WORDS: Rwanda, precolonial, colonial, postcolonial.

Linguist Josias Semujanga undertakes a discourse analysis of the 'fundamental narratives' of the Rwandan genocide, adding nuance to the simplistic explanation that colonial impact underlay this horror. But rather than a broad examination of 'origins' as implied by the title, his work focuses on language and ideas related to the genocide.

Semujanga argues that precolonial Rwandan culture was tripolar, giving as examples social groups (Hutu/Tutsi/Twa, or family/friend/foe) and political structure (chiefs of land, cattle, army). Under European – and specifically Catholic missionary influence – it became bipolar (convert/pagan, Hutu/Tutsi) leading to the exclusion of Tutsi and eventually to genocide. He jumps over the critical question of how the 'acceptability of exclusion', even if it were as widespread as he argues, morphed into willingness to kill. He barely mentions attacks by Tutsi refugees on Rwanda in the 1950s and the 1990 invasion by the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front, historical events central to this transformation.

The bipolarity that Semujanja describes reflects a twentieth-century interpretation of the past: earlier social structure was multipolar (clans being more important than ethnic group) and political arrangements were far from uniformly tripartite. Nor did bipolarity arrive with Europeans. It certainly existed in patron–client relations (*ubuhake/ubukonde*) whether Tutsi/Hutu or Hutu/Hutu. In explaining tripolarity, Semujanga relates the tale of Gihanga testing his three sons (Hutu/Tutsi/Twa) before giving the right to rule to the Tutsi. But a bipolar, probably earlier, version of the same tale has two protagonists, male and female, with the male – of course – winning the right to rule. Semujanga fails to note practices of exclusion in precolonial Rwanda, where Hutu and Tutsi regularly excluded Twa from many aspects of social life and where the *kubandwa* religious system excluded the uninitiated, much as Christianity was to exclude pagans.

Semujanja trusts his own convictions and 'logic' more than verifiable facts. This leads him to assert that the population of Rwanda in 1990 was 6 million, not the official 7.3 million and to claim that the French Operation Turquoise found the

Nyarushishi camp peopled by Hutu refugees from Burundi, not Tutsi genocide survivors as they themselves claimed to be. He often presents information without sources or claims the information is generally known, such as words supposedly used by Hutu when killing Tutsi. Evidence of this kind fails to make his theory more convincing.

The work shows that discourse analysis could contribute to our understanding of the Rwandan genocide, but to do so it must be rigorously argued and carefully documented. Further such studies might begin with Semuganja's book, itself a text laden with multiple messages.

*Buffalo, NY*

ALISON DES FORGES