

Thornton has thought deeply about the choices he made, and despite the above critiques, there are legitimate intellectual justifications for the interpretations he chose. His work forces African historians to reevaluate the evidentiary value of contemporary European documentation. Although there are still many questions, by providing us with an introduction to the wealth of existing sources, by developing a clear political chronology, and by locating descriptions in time and place, he has provided a baseline for future generations of historians. There is, at last, little reason for historians to return to the authority of *Kingdoms*.

Will Thornton's work approach the impact and legacy of Vansina's *Kingdoms*? Precolonial African history, as Thornton notes, is no longer as popular as it was in the 1970s, and as such the *History of West Central Africa* may never be viewed as the landmark contribution as *Kingdoms*. But the most compelling reason for Thornton's work to be discussed for many years to come is less what is in vogue in the Western academy and more the work's relevance for Central Africans. *Kingdoms* was translated and distributed among many of the polities that it described, giving legitimacy and agency to the history of those outside the ambit of the colonial and postcolonial elite. (That might have been Vansina's intention). Even as Thornton's focus on archives appears to further distance professional academic historiography from the histories told by these societies, the power and appreciation of documents by Central Africans should not be underestimated. As this review is penned in early 2021, supporters of the Movimento do Protectorado Lunda Tchokwe, several of whom have been killed by the Angolan security apparatus, stake their claims for regional autonomy on the agreements signed between one of Thornton's key sources, Henrique Dias de Carvalho, and the Lunda paramount almost 140 years ago. Thornton's work will direct us all to this rich history in documents, with its ongoing relevance.

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## Race, Tourism, and Conservation in South Africa

### Safari Nation: A Social History of the Kruger National Park

By Jacob S. T. Dlamini. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2020. Pp. 350. \$36.95, paperback (ISBN: 978-0-8214-2409-4); \$80.00, hardcover (ISBN: 978-0-8214-2408-7); \$36.99, e-book (ISBN: 978-0-8214-4088-9).

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Following Jane Carruther's seminal work *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History*, the Kruger National Park (KNP) has become an important location through which to disentangle South Africa's complex history.<sup>1</sup> Jacob S. T. Dlamini's *Safari Nation* builds on this tradition and demonstrates that Kruger was never the exclusively white playground of popular and scholarly imagination. Rather, he adopts a 'histories of presence' framework to offer evidence of black experiences with the park, both inside and outside of the preserved landscape (3). Dlamini constructs

<sup>1</sup>J. Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (Pietermaritzburg, 1995).

'black' as a composite entity that includes Africans, Asians, and Coloureds, all of whom are key to his efforts to recover black presence in South Africa's conservation history, with KNP providing the backdrop and framing context to the story.

Part 1 of the book, titled 'Movements', is divided into four chapters. Within the section, Dlamini deftly charts incidences of African mobilities and livelihoods within KNP that revolve around hunting and labor relations. Park authorities contested African hunting as 'depredation' or poaching. On the other hand, African hunters were fulfilling an age-old livelihoods activity, and did so to express grievance against restrictions limiting access to material benefits from a protected ecology (54). The park was also a zone of movement for itinerant wage laborers from Mozambique destined for the South African mines, many of whom were detained as they passed through. As punishment for trespassing, they worked on the park's maintenance. 'Native' residents and squatters residing within the park were employed as regulars or rangers. Dlamini also analyzes how an educated, wealthy, and Christianized African elite utilized the segregated railway infrastructure to go on tours. He argues that historians need to take seriously how a class of black South Africans viewed the park as a valued recreational space. There they found a measure of freedom in a rapidly modernizing and segregationist South Africa (90–2).

Also divided into four chapters is Part 2, 'Homelands', in which Dlamini uses cases of black interaction with KNP to demonstrate their visibility in the park. African, Indian, and Coloured elites toured the park to maintain their social statuses, notwithstanding colonial and apartheid restrictions on black mobility within the park. Black visitors made their own travel and accommodation arrangements. While on these tours, visitors from multiple communities tapped into networks of solidarity to 'avoid [the] petty humiliation of racism', while forging a sense of communalism in the process (167, 171). Elsewhere in the section, Dlamini pivots to consider the experiences of ordinary Africans, particularly female domestic workers, who visited the park with their European employers. Other Africans worked as tour guides, attendants, and caretakers in KNP. He uses these communities and their tours and visits to demonstrate that black people from various walks of life navigated segregationist restrictions in pursuit of various forms of leisure in nature. Dlamini successfully demonstrates how tourism revealed the complexity of black experiences of and responses to white rule and shows how class played an important role in shaping this — especially when it came to questions of leisure (185–7).

One of Dlamini's more significant contributions is in how he expands his analysis to encompass the Bantustans that surrounded KNP. He argues that Bantustans, designed to deprive blacks of citizenship, generated contradictions that ultimately undermined apartheid's broader national mission and KNP's restrictive policies. Bantustans assured 'self-rule' and 'citizenship' to their African inhabitants, a 'privilege' that spared them KNP's racist restrictive policies. This led to unintended, gradual desegregation and decolonization of the park, a process accelerated by the homelands' African rulers to pursue local conservation measures that challenged apartheid's prerogative on resource conservation (187–93).

Dlamini conclusively demonstrates the many ways in which Africans, Indians and Coloureds were present in the KNP during the eras of segregation and apartheid. Yet even though the end of apartheid and the ascendance of Mandela to power in 1994 ushered in both democracy and inclusive conservation — what Dlamini describes as 'social ecology' — KNP has still failed to exorcise the ghosts of historic racial policies. This is evidenced by the persistence in tensions between the park and its African workers and neighbors over grazing rights, land dispossession, animal depredation of community farms, fire outbreak damages, and unsettled compensation claims. These legacies have undermined the transformation of KNP into a truly national symbol.

*Safari Nation* is a tour de force into the social history of KNP. Dlamini relies on archival and oral sources, including an impeccable collection of pictures and maps, to disentangle South Africa's histories of exclusion and conflict resulting from efforts to institute white nationalism through conservation. He uses multiple microhistories to demonstrate how blacks undermined this pursuit,

enabling him to provide an alternative, more national, South African history regarding KNP. The book reads as a sophisticated social history of wide ranging but related issues spawned by the creation of KNP: dispossession, labor relations, livelihoods, justice, freedom, black nationalism and intellectual life, citizenship, gender, class, democracy, and trauma, among others. Also, while the last three chapters offer an excellent analysis on elusive efforts by postapartheid South Africans to achieve a national identity around KNP, Dlamini does so by relying on episodes involving only African communities. There is an obvious silence on the roles played by Indian and Coloured communities on the postapartheid order relating to the park, an absence more notable for Dlamini's efforts to show how South Africans insisted that the KNP was theirs during the heyday of segregation. This notwithstanding, *Safari Nation* is powerful, thought-provoking, well-written, and an excellent addition to South African social and conservation history.

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## Rethinking Colonial Science and Development in East Africa

### African Environmental Crisis: A History of Science for Development

By Gufu Oba. New York: Routledge, 2020. Pp. 258. \$160.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9780367432614); \$44.05, e-book (ISBN: 9781003002161).

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Gufu Oba's *African Environmental Crisis* is a compelling study that analyzes the influence of imperial science in the development of Britain's East African colonies. It focuses on the 'African environmental crisis', a hypothesis held by scientists and colonial officers throughout the twentieth century that assumed African land-use practices were contributing to soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, desiccation, and the spread of insect vectors. This hypothesis held that if these practices were left unchecked, environmental and economic devastation would result. Oba refutes this assumption through a detailed study of the era's scientific research, arguing instead that colonial scientists generated inaccurate views of African landscapes by drawing on flawed assumptions and developing research programs hindered by their short-term focus. By linking environment, science, and development, the book makes a strong contribution to both the fields of African environmental history and the history of science.

Oba's book follows a number of scholarly works that have addressed the mythology of these destruction narratives, including Fairhead and Leach's *Misreading the African Landscape* and Bassett and Crummey's *African Savannas*.<sup>1</sup> Oba's approach is unique in its focus on the role of

<sup>1</sup>J. Fairhead and M. Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic* (Cambridge, 1996); T. J. Bassett and D. Crummey (eds.), *African Savannas: Global Narratives & Local Knowledge of Environmental Change* (Oxford, 2003).