

being carried out. She recalls the hushed tones of her relatives and others in the Bulawayo area at the time and people's fear of openly discussing what was happening. Since then, there have been much more open calls for justice for the victims and their families who suffered and lost during the Gukurahundi, and these calls have recently entered the political discourse of the opposition, with Morgan Tsvangarai in his 2008 campaign calling for a 'truth telling' commission to help address the open sores of the Gukurahundi.

During the summer of 2008, Mugabe's ZANU-PF leadership and its supporters have shown that they recall very clearly the effective impact the 5th Brigade had in silencing opposition. When the traditional ZANU-PF strongholds in rural Shona districts failed to vote for ZANU-PF, and the MDC made significant electoral gains in the March 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections, the tactics of collective beatings, killings, rapes and disappearances resurfaced to 'prepare' for the presidential run-off election at the end of June 2008. While the violence was not on the same scale of the Gukurahundi, these tactics show continuity in the callous strategies used by the ZANU-PF to remain in power, and add to the evidence of the potential for further violence in Zimbabwe. The decision to republish the Report in 2007, and to present it in such a clear and professional edition, will certainly help to call attention to the historical similarities with more recent deployments of political violence, as well as to raise the hope that some form of justice will come to those who lost and suffered so much in the 1980s. This Report is a very significant document in Zimbabwean history and should also be examined and taught by those working in other areas of African history.

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TIMOTHY SCARNECCHIA

A REASSEMENT OF VIOLENCE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EASTERN AFRICA

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War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa. By RICHARD REID. Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2007. Pp. xvi + 256. £55 (ISBN 978-184701-605-8); £16.95, paperback (ISBN 978-184701-604-1).

KEY WORDS: Eastern Africa, precolonial, violence, war.

Over the past several years, scholars have devoted increasing attention to the relatively under-studied history of violence and vulnerability in precolonial eastern Africa. Richard Reid's book is a valuable contribution to this growing body of literature. Focusing on what he describes as 'the last bastion of the kind of distorted Eurocentric scholarship that characterized African studies before the 1960s' (p. 3), Reid's history of warfare in precolonial eastern Africa aims to refute notions of African warfare as simple, crude and lacking in strategies and tactics. More than merely a work of military history, however, the book seeks 'to understand the role of militarism and warfare in African state, society, economy and culture, and the ways in which these change in the pre-colonial period' (p. 4).

Despite its title and some effort to discuss the history of warfare in the region's more distant past, the work for the most part focuses on the second half of the nineteenth century. With respect to geographic foci, Reid limits his study to two distinct zones within eastern Africa: lacustrine east-central Africa, which includes present-day central and southern Uganda as well as northern and central

Tanzania; and north-eastern Africa, which includes present-day central and northern Ethiopia as well as Eritrea. Reid focuses within these zones on what he terms 'corridors of conflict' – areas that witnessed particularly intense conflict in the nineteenth century – and, guided by the availability of sources, primarily directs attention to conflicts that unfolded at the level of the state.

The book is divided into three parts. The introductory section – 'Theory & Context' – consists of two chapters that introduce the key themes in the book and seek to connect subsequent chapters on nineteenth-century developments to earlier histories of the relationship between warfare, memories of violence, and state formation. The two chapters in Part 2 – 'Armies' – focus on military organization and examine the structure of armies as well as the types of weapons and tactics employed in battle. Part 3 – 'Process, Impact, & Culture' – consists of five chapters and provides the bulk of Reid's interpretive insights. The chapters in this section concern the economic aspects of conflict, the relationship between warfare and the development of social structures, conflict resolution and diplomacy, and what Reid calls 'the culture of conflict'.

By focusing attention on issues such as the make-up of armies, weaponry, tactics and the costs and profits of violent undertakings, Reid seeks to refute notions of African wars as 'primitive' and 'tribal' by presenting warfare in eastern Africa as a rational enterprise. This approach allows him both to challenge the 'economic model' of African warfare, which presents African wars as a response to external demand, particularly for slaves, and to place African actors and their motivations at the center of the historical narratives he details. The fundamental problem with the focus on overseas influences in the 'economic model' of conflict, Reid contends, is that it places Africans in 'an essentially passive, receptive role, ... always reacting rather than initiating'. While acknowledging that external commercial influences shaped the nature of violence in nineteenth-century eastern Africa, Reid argues that in many respects 'the role of the external dynamic has been exaggerated' (pp. 110–11). Instead, he proposes a modified version of the 'economic model', in which Africans incorporate the products and demands of global commerce into their communities on their own terms, based on existing needs. In his discussion of Ethiopia, for instance, Reid notes how 'guns were adapted to local tactics, and not the other way around' (p. 59). Another key example comes from the Great Lakes region, where the slave trade was but one among many factors motivating warfare among regional powers such as Buganda, Urambo and Unyanyembe. Reid contends that in these areas of state-directed warfare, the acquisition of slaves was an outcome rather than the motivating factor behind violence: 'more slaves might be gathered in the course of conflicts, ... but more conflicts were not necessarily fought to achieve this' (p. 119). According to Reid's model, then, external commercial influences presented Africans with new opportunities to pursue political and material interests based on extant ideologies and conflicts. Rather than resulting in more vigorous economies, however, the violence that accompanied 'the great struggles for trade and material growth across the region' ultimately served to undermine economic growth in nineteenth-century eastern Africa.

While Reid's endeavors to present Africans as rational actors in the theatre of warfare are laudable (if not perhaps a bit overstated), his efforts in this regard at times blind him from an appropriate consideration of what he terms 'spiritual' or 'religious' matters. Reid often reduces activities in these realms to an overlay for material concerns. Commenting on the importance that warfare be spiritually sanctioned, he writes that 'reference to the spirit-world permitted, as religion often does, the leaving aside of individual responsibility in these matters', and further notes how 'rather more earthly ambition was disguised by a fatalistic approach to life itself'. In making such claims, however, Reid, perhaps unintentionally,

relegates healers and practices of public healing to the realm of the irrational. In so doing, he fails to recognize the manner in which these figures and the ideas upon which they drew both shaped and guided politically sanctioned violence. This criticism aside, Reid has produced a useful book that will serve as inspiration for future scholarship on violence and conflict in eastern Africa and beyond.

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CHANGES OF ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL LIFE IN THE SERENGETI

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Imagining Serengeti: A History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from the Earliest Times to the Present. By JAN BENDER SHETLER. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 378. No price given (ISBN 0-8214-1750-9).

KEY WORDS: Tanzania, environment, memory, oral narratives/sources, spatial patterns.

In *Imagining Serengeti*, Jan Bender Shetler examines time, space, cultural life and landscape in eastern Africa. The book's impressive collection of oral history contributes to a broad time-scale – about 2,000 years – which reveals how social life changes along the western woodlands of the Serengeti–Mara ecosystem. While the oral traditions do mark certain places, they also contain discernible patterns of spatial imagery describing particular landscape types. The *longue durée* approach adds teeth to a pointed critique of the Western-style conservation that led to the formation of the Serengeti National Park, which, she argues, has impoverished the peoples now shunted away from its boundaries in favor of the park's pristine wildernesses.

Elders from the western Serengeti region contributed extensively to the project; the book cites almost 200 interviews. Shetler's careful interpretation identifies the various biophysical spaces occupied by an open-ended system of agropastoralism, which for centuries successfully exploited the region's diverse natural resources. The evidence suggests that the ongoing interactions among autochthonous groups and newcomers fostered cooperation along the western Serengeti's ecological transition zones where exchanges occurred among herders, farmers and hunters. In the book's early chapters, Shetler draws upon what she refers to as the 'core spatial imagery' of diversification and adaptation that stressed the preservation of landscape health, and therefore food security. As another hedge against insecurity, people rooted their spirituality in particular places, which they believed held power over fertility, healing and evil. In this way, over many centuries, the western Serengeti's peoples built landscapes.

The extended time-scale allows Shetler to stress historical continuity, but the oral traditions tend to underplay the historical role of conflict. The very presence of a landscape management strategy designed to avert risk suggests very strongly that climatic and ecological stresses regularly visited the western Serengeti, situations that have in more recent times produced regional and local violence. The interaction of social change and ecological stress, however, is more clearly drawn for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Imagining Serengeti* provides a significant contribution to the historiography of this era in East Africa by explaining how generally open societies reorganize spatial perceptions under pronounced