Haggard and they relied on the Hamitic hypothesis to contrast the white psyche with the 'primitive' African.

While Robinson demonstrates that the Hamitic hypothesis captivated Western imaginations, the role the theory played within Africa itself could be fleshed out more fully. It certainly affirmed colonial conquest of Africa, a point that Robinson could emphasize more forcefully. Elucidating the ways in which the hypothesis was implemented in colonial rule could potentially strengthen Robinson's argument that the theory was a factor in the Rwandan genocide. Given that missionaries provided most colonial schooling for Africans, it would be helpful to know to what extent they embraced and taught the theory, particularly since few, if any, would have accepted polygenism. Closer attention to missionaries on the ground in Buganda would also help avert errors such as the reference to Bishop Hannington as Hannigan.

This engagingly written book is poised to hold crossover appeal for both general and academic audiences. The short chapters appear designed to satisfy today's undergraduates and while the archival work focuses mainly on Stanley, the use of wide-ranging sources is impressive. Academics may be mildly frustrated over the formatting of the references: citations are confined to the end of paragraphs with all sources listed in the same endnote. This reader found herself seeking more detailed information. Similarly, deeper contextualization of the architects of the Hamitic hypothesis could illuminate any challenges that they faced. Although Robinson offers some tantalizing details about the proponents of the theory, he skirts the complicated terrain in which they theorized. For example, the field of anthropology was more variegated than it appears in the book. Americans were divided over racial theories of equality and difference and the British debated diffusionist and functionalist understandings of culture. Perhaps most critically since the book targets audiences who may be less acquainted with the subject, those who promoted the hypothesis can seem to be operating simply in the interests of furthering science rather than within specific milieus that championed ideas of white superiority.

Despite the minor shortcomings enumerated above, this book merits reading by wide audiences. It provides an absorbing narrative of the broad range of disciplines that contributed to a dangerous myth. Moreover, Robinson writes with deep empathy for Stanley, seeking to understand his claim. The poignant ending validates Stanley's apparent desire to find the familiar and asserts the insecurities that explorers and scientists held in the industrial era.

REBECCA C. HUGHES
Seattle Pacific University

WAYS WITH WORDS AND WOODS

Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa.
By Kathryn M. de Luna.
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016. Pp. xvii + 332. $85.00, hardback (ISBN 978-0-300-21853-4).
doi:10.1017/S0021853717000640

Key Words: Zambia, Central Africa, linguistics, method, environment.

Kathryn de Luna's versatile vision of the mid-first-millennium to mid-second millennium ambitions and achievements of the peoples living in what is now central Zambia and surrounding regions takes the Ehret-Schoenbrun style of linguistic history to provocative new levels of exquisite historical sensibility. The book is more than a methodological *tour de force*, mastering the rich archaeology of the region between the Limpopo valley and the equatorial forest. It draws on the recent wave of climatic and environmental insight that has washed over the classic search for the inventors and speakers of Bantu languages who moved out over nearly all of Africa south and east of Cameroon in a 3,000-year series of adaptations and innovations, and expands on original research in the 'Botatwe' languages of the region. These people lived in the historiographical hole in the middle of the doughnut of an early history of the region glazed with large political systems glossed as 'kingdoms'. The seemingly timeless 'stateless societies' of these historically forgotten folks were once the beloved subjects of some of the best of the post-Second World War generation of British social anthropologists, which included Elizabeth Colson and Victor Turner. Numerous historians working in recent years in other parts of the continent have replaced that vacuously negative characterization with substantive insight into the dynamics of the changes flowing constantly through the flexible relationships of their families, neighborhoods, professional guilds, so-called 'big men' and their retinues, healing cults, and commercial associations. De Luna imbues these, and more, with an elegant empathy for meanings echoed in the modern words she tracks back to the feelings and experiences of the ancestors who conversed, shouted, and whispered them to one another. As revolutionary as have been her immediate predecessors in these parts of the continent – Jan Vansina's *Paths in the Rainforest* and *How Societies Are Born* and Kairn Klieman's *The Pygmies Were Our Compass* foremost among them – de Luna hears what ancient Botatwe-speakers meant, beyond how they may have said it, and sweeps her readers up in vibrant worlds of their affect and awareness all but unimaginable from the conventional perspective of modern instrumental rationality.

The book makes a no less surprising, and equally perceptive, argument for the significance of the woods in the lives of people almost always portrayed in the villages they inhabited and the fields they cultivated. It is not news that cultivators and herders everywhere routinely obtained significant components of their diets, among many other things, by harvesting in the wild, but Western scholarship, for reasons buried deep in its cultural history and insightfully assessed in de Luna's first chapter, backgrounds them as marginal or supplementary to seemingly more productive, and implicitly civilized, domesticated crops and animals. Half a century ago, Marshall Sahlins famously declared the world's hunters and gatherers the original 'affluent society' in a sense then current in cultural anthropology, but de Luna shows the centrality of collecting and the methods that Botatwe-language speakers used to adapt their richly socially meaningful practices of the bush to maintain them actively down to the very recent past through more than ten centuries of changing climates. Workers in the wild effectively united to diffuse authority, standing proudly apart from the hierarchical polities in the savanna 'kingdoms' surrounding them. From luxuriantly expressive linguistic innovations – lexical derivations, inventions, and borrowings – de Luna reconstructs multiple and changing meanings of bushcraft that converge on gaining prestige, winning the interest of prospective wives, earning the respect of elders,

and bargaining for the attention of the ancestors: thus, the people, present and past, 'cultivated' in her artful title.

De Luna's ironically dramatic narrative moves with the alternating cooler-drier and warmer-wetter phases in the climate of this transitional latitude between the humid equatorial regions to the north and the arid deserts to the south. She extends the familiar concept of 'expansion' by showing how Bantu-speakers continued moving locally and regionally long after their ancestors had arrived. The early-to-mid first-millennium proto-Botatwe-speaking generations who settled into these savannas (they were not the first to live there), broken up by well-watered and wooded river valleys, lived by collecting and hunting, and succeeding generations used the diverse, flexible, time-tested yields of the forests to support their cautious, uneven, slow experiments with cultivated crops. Everyone contributed; all were accomplished in ways of the woods. Only later, when warmer, wetter conditions lessened the risks and increased the yields of agriculture, did later generations cautiously commit to crops, 'rebalancing rather than replacing'. As ordinary people clustered in homesteads, the bush became a fascinating, feared cultural focus for them as they left the forests to skilled specialists whose exploits in the wild won them renown. Sedentarism also generated the ensuing paradox, as home-bound cultivators cultivated others who lived elsewhere and were more existentially remote from them by inventing socially extensive and inclusive exogamous matriclans and unilineally-defined categories of marriage partners and other associations that defined relationships and corresponding obligations over distances and across divides of language and custom. This process, in effect, powerfully scaled up inherited local intimacies of community to include strangers and convert them to Botatwe ways.

De Luna's eminently sensible historical accounting for familiar, but until now unexplained, fundamental aspects of life in these savannas continues on. Through these dispersed networks trade flourished, moving goods rather than people, a point they made by deriving their word for it from a verb meaning 'to walk'. With settlement, the widely spoken languages of earlier eras dissolved into the more numerous and diversified descendant languages of today. Villagers then converted hunting from a solitary adventure to collective drives with fire and nets that drew entire neighborhoods together to produce, distribute, and consume food, creating community around commensality. A final chapter reviews the rich trove of archaeological evidence throughout the region to reconstruct local changes in prosperity with shifting production of ivory, copper, salt, and minerals distributed through networks linking the margins of the Kalahari Desert to the Indian Ocean from unexpectedly early times. This material also documents de Luna's discernment of a previously unrecognized southerly chain of trading connections. Only at the end of her story do the large, costly, and violent 'kingdoms of the savannas', as well as Portuguese along the Zambezi, loom on the horizons of an area that she endows with provocatively paradoxical analytical significance as a 'central frontier', a place in its own right, proudly independent of its surroundings, but also crucially connecting all their neighbors to one another. De Luna thus uses Botatwe phrasings to reveal the robust motivating logics of their inventors' ancient actions, entirely independent of the ghostly projections of modern instrumentalities that otherwise haunt the history of early Africa. This is the epistemological gold standard of history in Africa in any era.

In this book, specialists will find numerous details in the ample modern ethnographies of the region accounted for as meaningful human creations, contextualized in time, with serial consequences to which others, including later generations, reacted. De Luna writes in graceful, multi-layered, almost sensual prose certain to engage even those readers not familiar with the names of the vanished people, obscure places, and technical practices detailed. With linguistics-based insight, confirmed in impressive detail by imaginative readings of the archaeological data and set in nuanced paleoclimatic and environmental contexts, de Luna has charted the historical composition of the elements of the historical accumulations that modern ethnographers describe as 'culture'. This understanding of ethnography as historical creation, systematic preservation, and compilation opens the potent methodological prospect of reverse-engineering the method: deconstructing recent descriptions of modern practices and ideas and words to discern and sequence their creations as history.

Collecting Food, Cultivating People is an intellectual history of foraging with an intricacy and maturity of insight seldom seen in a first book. It exudes a whole range of important methodological and epistemological best practices. We can surely look forward to a distinguished career of a historian who knows how to allow her ancient subjects to speak for themselves, and then listens respectfully to them across the centuries, even millennia, in subtle, comprehending ways. De Luna's own perceptive phrasings are recurringly arresting, but as she concludes her introduction, the book is a 'story best told in Botatwe-speakers' own words'; she makes that true, in more ways than one.

JOSEPH C. MILLER
University of Virginia, emeritus

A NEW EPIC OF ANCIENT MALI

Sunjata: A New Prose Version.
Edited and translated by David C. Conrad.
Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 2016. Pp. xl + 140. $43.00, hardback (ISBN 978-1-62466-495-3); $14.00, paperback (ISBN 978-1-62466-494-6).
doi:10.1017/S0021853717000652

Key Words: Mali, West Africa, literature, oral narratives, sources.

David Conrad's *Sunjata: A New Prose Version* is a rarity; a scholarly English translation of a performance of West Africa's most famous oral epic that eschews a line-by-line text. Linear translations have dominated the market since the 1970s: Gordon Innes's *Sunjata: Three Mandinka Versions* (1973); John Johnson's *Son-Jara* (1986); and, Conrad's own *Sunjata: A West African Epic of the Mande Peoples* (2004). The last unquestionably successful prose translation was Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (1965), first published in French in 1960. Niane's version is a perennial favourite but renders the narrative of its griot or *jeli*, Mamoudou Kouyate, in the style of a novel. By contrast, Conrad's new version of *Sunjata*, which is a reworking of his 2004 translation of a