

By examining corruption not just as historically situated but as closely entangled with the development of the Nigerian state, Pierce shines a light on the emergence of facets of the state that seem dysfunctional, and on how it projects itself to 'look like' a state even as it struggles to act like one (p. 215). Corruption in Nigeria, then, is not simply a moral failing eating at the fabric of the Nigerian state, or a different conception of norms. Rather, it comprises complex negotiations around authority, leadership, obligation, accountability and power. These negotiations, as Pierce ably establishes, have long historical roots but have been, are and will be subject to change as the Nigerian state itself is reworked.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972019000731

Alden Young, *Transforming Sudan: decolonization, economic development, and state formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hb £78.99 – 978 1 107 17249 4). 2018, 180 pp.

Coming out in 2018 when Sudan was in deep fiscal and other crises, Alden Young's book could not have come at a more opportune time. With South Sudan thrown into deadly civil strife and Sudan embroiled in protracted conflicts and uncertainties, one cannot help seeking a retrospective reading for current calamities. Young's book not only provides such a reading, but, more importantly, it poses a serious challenge to both the cultural-anthropological and economic historiography of Sudan. In explaining the historic journey of modern Sudan, the former lays more emphasis on ethnic and cultural factors, attributing state collapse to violence emanating from the failure to manage diversity and differences among ethnic, regional and religious groups. The latter, on the other hand, highlights economic factors operating through processes of core-periphery exploitation as the root cause of the present malaise.

Young manages to skilfully navigate a different route, courting cultural factors without totally succumbing to their taxonomy while incorporating economic factors without giving in to economic analysis à la Marxist canons. However, Young's adroit navigation is not without risks, since he has to answer possible charges levied against his new and bold call for a 'new African economic history'.

From the viewpoint of cultural anthropologists, he is open to critique for downplaying non-economic variables in informing economic and financial calculations – variables stemming from colonial paternalism as manifested by Nuba and Southern policies that sought to protect Nuba and Southerners from the perceived harmful effects of Arab culture and Islam; after independence, ethnic-regional prejudice dominated. At times, these considerations probably had the upper hand over the economizing logic of bureaucracy, which tended to privilege the centre over the periphery. Ethnic and regional differences were real and remained so simply because patterns of economic development have since failed to tackle root grievances up to our present time.

On the other hand, economic historians may raise criticisms on two levels. On one, they may see the work as being confined to the exposition of the observable: that is, accounting systems, economic budgets and fiscal decisions that failed to attend to the underlying wider social context of competing colonial, local and

national forces informing these decisions and their 'structural' budgets. On another level, they may take issue with the book's approach that sees the state as an independent agency cut off from its underlying structures of dependence and class politics. A number of economic historians have researched the significance of structural changes in the economy since Turko-Egyptian days, through the Mahdist state to the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, and later to independence, highlighting the retrogressive march of the economy from dependency to dependency, and from quasi-articulated development to maldevelopment and rentierism. Present by its conspicuous absence is any reference to this line of research and thinking that informed the critiques of the economic and financial policies and budgetary calculations of the late 1940s and 1950s.

Also absent from the book is any reference to local resistance to financial policies. The Cultivators' Equalization Fund, to give one example, was a serious bone of contention, and of later conflict between officials and farmers; there were also the notable workers' industrial actions against the first military government and also ignored resistance of subaltern movements in the peripheries. In other words, the people's narrative is ignored and what is presented is mostly history from above, not from below.

Young's is an exhaustive and extensive study; the book's chapters are well structured and cover the major periods of the country's economic history from 1820 to 1966, with a concluding chapter setting its sights on the theoretical horizons of a new African economic history. The book, however, leaves something to be desired as it is not clear which of the periods constitutes a 'critical juncture', to use the language of path-dependence analysis.

The author maintains that economic nationalism must have taken off at some point in time. Yet, unfortunately, the 'economizing logic of bureaucracy', with all its calculative financial skills, seems to have been hijacked not by developmental nationalism but by ethno-regionalism, the sorry outcome of which shows up in the failed separation of South Sudan and the dismembered state in the rest of the country.

Having said this, it should be noted that the particular significance of this book lies in its novel approach or 'paradigm in the making' as applied to the case of Sudan by digging into new archival records that shed fresh light on the country's fiscal history from 1820 to 1966. Furthermore, the book helpfully places the debate on African history and its rich socio-economic and political narratives within the contemporary theoretical context by opening up conversations that engage theoretical preoccupations such as Michel Foucault's bio-politics and Timothy Mitchell's 'rule of experts' theory. With Young's book, one can now confidently say that researching Sudan and African economic history has taken a new turn.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972019000743

Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *The Truth about Crime: sovereignty, knowledge, social order*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press (hb US\$85 – 978 0 226 42488 0; pb US\$27.50 – 978 0 226 42491 0). 2016, xix + 347 pp.

In *The Truth about Crime*, Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff develop a set of arguments, first outlined in their landmark collection *Law and Disorder in the*