

entrustment institutions were responsible for mutual support in times of crisis. These relationships were based on manifold contingencies and were much more complex than just repaying a loan. Remnants of these affiliations are still found in modern Africa, as people, against all odds, survive hard times without government support.

In the third section Smythe clearly demonstrates that both colonialism and development theories and practices have been destructive to African societies and have suppressed African ingenuity. Probably the most poignant example is found in her description of programs run by the U.N., development groups, and modern African states to force African nomadic populations into a sedentary way of life. These nomadic peoples are animal herders and able to survive in semi-arid to arid regions because they are mobile. Their nomadism may well be a lesson in how humans can adapt and survive in harsh environments.

What I did find problematic in this book is the lack of acknowledgments or citations to the work of African scholars. A book dedicated to presenting African worldviews and their relevance to modern times needs at least to consider the voices of modern Africans and their scholarship. This is especially disappointing in the discussions of development issues, since both Dambisa Moyo's book, *Dead Aid* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010) and Paul Kagame's speeches and writings on the crippling effects of international aid on Africa are well known.

In conclusion, this book is courageous because it is a macrohistory of Africa and encourages the teaching of expansive African histories and African worldviews. Since African history is deep, diverse, and complex, generalizations are inevitable in a comprehensive African past written for undergraduates. This of course leaves the author open to critiques from "experts" in particular fields who don't totally agree with her summations. Smythe writes, "Africans do not have a better history than any other part of the world, they simply have an underappreciated history" (6). The only way for African history to become an essential part of modern historical discourse is through the writing and publishing of more histories like *Africa's Past*.

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Eric Jennings. *Free French Africa in World War II: The African Resistance*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xv + 300 pp. Maps. Photographs. Index. \$27.99. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-107-69697-6.

In this new and excellent book, Eric Jennings further enhances our understanding of the topic—World War II in the French Empire—that was also the subject of his earlier important work, *Vichy in the Tropics* (Stanford

University Press, 2002). By focusing on the much neglected story of the federation of French Equatorial Africa (AEF), which was under the Free French during the war, this book gives us the opportunity to compare both types of competing colonial regimes that emerged due to the circumstances of the war—the Free French and Vichy. Jennings, therefore, not only contributes to our knowledge about French participation in the war, but also enhances our understanding of the nature of French colonialism in Africa and its ramifications both on the *metropole* and on the African populations living in the colonies. Jennings's goal, as he states in the introduction, is not only to measure the importance of AEF for the Free French movement, but also to expose the actions, roles, and voices of those African soldiers, workers, and farmers who were part of the war effort and to determine how they perceived the war and what it meant for them.

The book is based on a wide and impressive range of primary sources collected from archives in France, Britain, Germany, and the United States, as well as in African archives in Congo, Cameroon, and Senegal. The first part introduces us to the struggle between Vichy and Free French supporters over AEF and the initial attempts of the Free French to legitimize their rule over the federation following their grasp of power. One way of acquiring legitimacy was by presenting the unfamiliar French leader, Charles de Gaulle, to Africans through propaganda. Jennings offers us a fascinating glimpse here of the African reception of this image by quoting an African legend distributed at the time according to which de Gaulle had been dead for five years and had come out of his grave to save France.

The second part of the book deals with the military participation of AEF in the war. Here Jennings does not retell known stories about important battles on the African continent but rather completes these stories by putting them in their African and colonial context. We learn about discontent among soldiers who resented the racist attitudes of their commanders and also that the first “whitening” of the Free French units actually occurred during the fighting in the city of Algiers a year before the more famous battle of liberation.

In the third and especially fascinating part of the book Jennings leaves the military domain and deals with the everyday reality of Africans who were forced to work for the military effort. Through an examination of complaint letters submitted by African farmers and workers to colonial administrators, Jennings exposes the harsh reality in which Africans lived during the war and the racist attitudes they encountered. This part of the book reveals the incredible measure of colonial repression and extortion of resources that the Free French exercised in AEF. The conditions of forced labor, which were severe enough before the war, became even worse due to the pressure to produce more to support the war effort. Jennings thus demonstrates how the Free French turned the federation into a war machine.

Finally, in his epilogue Jennings discusses the ways in which the Free French episode in Africa was later remembered. The choice of adding this

part was an excellent one, as it can help us evaluate better the current French “politics of remembrance” in relation to the role that French-ruled Africa and African soldiers played in the liberation of France and the eventual Allied victory.

By completing the picture of WWII in the French empire, Jennings opens the door for a wide array of questions that can teach us not only about the specific subject of the book but also about the French colonial experience in general. More than anything, Jennings reminds us that while it is important to remember the contribution of the empire and its peoples to the war effort, we should not forget that this contribution was usually not voluntary. It was part of a long tradition of colonial repression. The striking similarities in the colonial context between two regimes with opposing ideologies—the Free French and Vichy—should not be blurred by the myths African politicians helped to encourage after the war and which they may not have believed themselves. Current French and African celebrations of the loyal empire and its part in the victory over Nazi Germany should therefore not obscure the fact that even the antifascist regime of the Free French was part of a repressive colonial system based on the same values it supposedly rejected.

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Yebio Woldemariam. *Ethiopia, An Ancient Land: Agriculture, History, and Politics*. Trenton, N.J.: The Red Sea Press, 2016. xviii + 301 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-56902-426-3.

Ethiopia has been continually challenged by the historical trio of drought, famine, and wars, and today food security is still a major problem. Indeed, since the 1985 Sahelian drought, Ethiopia has attracted world attention for its devastating famines. Combining consultancy and research experience and focusing on the correlation between the historical and political factors, Yebio Woldemariam provides an excellent account of agricultural production in Ethiopia since medieval times. Starting with a history of famine, the author states that the numbers of “people requiring food aid [have] been increasing exponentially since the 1960s,” and he names Ethiopian feudalism and its “intricate relationship between land tenure system and the producers” as one of the factors. He argues that “the provincial lords continued to extract both commodity and labor surplus at whim,” leading to “the ultra-parasitic relationship” that significantly affects agricultural production (38). Continued warfare, natural catastrophes like locust invasions, and dependence on cereals have also hindered the “emergence of technical inventions” (50) that dramatically improved