

excessive ‘culturalism’ and the theoreticist overkill of some important recent writing on such figures and movements. And even if in places one might wish to know more on the intellectual formations of the book’s *dramatis personae*, or on the conflict of worldviews and theories that (sometimes) underlay the clashes of tactics or personalities, the book already ranges very widely indeed. Most notably, it seeks to give in-depth coverage to African and pro-African agitation across its chosen period in both British and French imperial realms, and, indeed, the relations – fitful though these were – between the two. Derrick’s insistence, in his Conclusions, that he ‘has only been able to deal far too briefly’ with either protest and opposition among Africans or ‘moral objection to colonialism’ from Europe and elsewhere (p. 423), is surely over-modest when his book actually breaks so much new ground on both. Even if it were wholly true, as he goes on to say, that ‘events in any particular part of Africa have been given only summary attention in these pages, compared with what could be and to some extent has been written about them’ (p. 424), that would still leave his work standing as a pioneering attempt at synthesis. But his self-assessment is, again, too modest, for there is much here that will be new to even the closest specialist.

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GRASSROOT POLITICS AND DECOLONIZATION IN GUINEA

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Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–1958. By ELIZABETH SCHMIDT. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007. Pp. xvii + 310. £49.50/\$50, hardback (ISBN 978-0-8214-1763-8); £24.50/\$30, paperback (ISBN 978-0-8214-1764-5).

KEY WORDS: Guinea, decolonization, nationalism, politics/political.

This is the companion volume to Schmidt’s *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea* (reviewed in *JAH*, 47 (2006)). While the earlier work studied the nationalist movement and the political forces that led to Guinea’s ‘No’ vote in the 1958 constitutional referendum, this volume explores the nationalist movement in the context of French politics and the Cold War, and focuses specifically on the Left–Right political divide within the Guinean branch of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA).

After the humiliation of defeat and occupation during the Second World War, France was determined to reassert its position as a world power by re-branding the empire as the ‘French Union’ and introducing a programme of colonial reform in an effort to deter more radical solutions. However, these plans were at risk of being derailed by African and particularly Asian nationalist movements, and the onset of the Cold War only served to intensify French concerns.

In 1946, the RDA had chosen to affiliate to the French Communist Party (PCF) in Paris. The PCF was in government and, although it did not support nationalist demands for independence, it did have the most progressive stance of all the metropolitan political parties on the colonial question. However, with the onset of the Cold War and the Communists’ departure from government in 1947, the link with the PCF became a liability, as RDA activists were subjected to increasing

repression, so in 1950 the RDA's inter-territorial president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, decided to end the alliance with the Communists. According to Schmidt, this led to a rift between party leaders and radical, grassroots militants that reflected generational and class cleavages within the movement. This is significant because it sets the scene for Schmidt's analysis of the evolution of the Guinean RDA during the 1950s that was to lead to that territory's 'No' in the 1958 referendum. In her analysis, the colonial administration supported the creation of political parties dominated by chiefs, traditional elites, and regional and ethnic associations, but these parties had no real political base in the population. At the same time, the government 'undertook a dual strategy of co-optation and repression, attempting to push the [RDA] leadership to the Right while cracking down on local activists' (p. 6).

From the French perspective, this policy had begun to bear fruit by 1956–57, to the extent that the party leadership was by this time prepared to engage in a policy of constructive collaboration with the colonial government. However, this growing accommodation with the colonial government only served to increase the rift between the party leadership and grassroots militants, who condemned party leaders for accepting local self-government rather than demanding full independence. This is, in Schmidt's analysis, the essential backcloth to understanding the Guinean 'No' in the 1958 referendum. Radical activists at the party's grassroots, who in the years of repression had established solid roots in the mass of the population by responding to their concerns, had genuine popular support and were thus in a position to exert enormous pressure on the party leadership to adopt a pro-independence position in 1958. Fearing that they would lose support if they called for a 'Yes' vote, party leaders decided 'at the eleventh hour' to call for a 'No' vote.

By shifting the focus from elite to grassroots politics, Schmidt paints a picture of French decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa that is a welcome corrective to those earlier studies that appeared to view decolonization as the outcome of an essentially linear and orderly process, rather than the product of political struggle. At the same time, Schmidt's analysis raises some questions. Bernard Charles has shown that political violence was, from an early date, central to the Guinean RDA leadership's strategy to win the compliance, if not the support, of the population. It would be interesting to know how this fits with Schmidt's thesis of the grassroots exerting pressure on the party leadership to adopt more radical positions. There is also the question of how appropriate it is to view divisions within the RDA in terms of the Left–Right divide. While this makes sense in a metropolitan context, it is questionable to what extent it is applicable to African anti-colonial politics in the 1950s. In this context, who was more 'Left' – those advocating maintaining the link with the anti-imperialist (but not anti-colonial) PCF, or radical nationalists advocating independence and a complete break from France? As Fred Cooper has shown, these were not necessarily the same people. It would therefore be interesting to know if and to what extent such debates impacted on the RDA's politics in Guinea. Finally, although we gain from Schmidt's study a clear sense of the divide between the party leadership and the grassroots, when she uses the latter term she is actually referring to party activists. This is not the same as the mass of the population, which was presumably not so highly politicized. So how was their support gained and sustained, especially in the rural areas? Were appeals made to family, clan, ethnic, or religious solidarities and divisions? And how does this fit with an analysis of political divisions within the nationalist movement in terms of 'Left' and 'Right'?

This is nonetheless an important book. It makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of work that challenges the traditional view of French decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa as a process managed and controlled by French governing elites and African political leaders, from which the broader population is largely absent.

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A SOCIAL HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY OF MURDER IN NIGERIA

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The Man-leopard Murders: History and Society in Colonial Nigeria. By DAVID PRATTEN. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, London, 2007. Pp. xii + 425. £55, hardback (ISBN 978-0-7486-2553-6).

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, colonial, knowledge, local history, memory, religion, social organization.

In the Calabar Province of colonial Nigeria during the 1940s, a number of man-leopard killings took place: murders whereby the victim's body was elaborately mutilated to simulate a leopard attack. These murders triggered a large-scale police investigation that lasted from 1945 to 1948. The colonial administration had difficulty determining why these murders were taking place – were they ritual killings organised by a central master shrine? Were they linked to secret societies? Was the phenomenon related to witchcraft beliefs? Were the killings a response to demands for familiar forms of justice following the problematic reorganisation of the Native Court system in the 1930s? Were they the result of destabilised bride-price arrangements, particularly in divorce cases? In the end, the colonial administration decided that the killings were organised through *idiòṅ* shrines, whose diviners were thought to be leading a movement of crime and anti-colonial resistance. Consequently, the *idiòṅ* society was prohibited, and almost 1,000 *idiòṅ* shrines were destroyed by the police. More than fifty years later, David Pratten challenges this conclusion as 'difficult to accept' but certainly convenient for the colonial administration because '[b]y highlighting superstition, tradition and custom as the cause of the man-leopard murders, the colonial authorities strengthened the case for their own civilising mission, and deflected attention away from the more immediate issues that dominated each of the murder cases' (p. 273). Pratten does not offer one single alternative explanation, but has rather taken the killings as the starting point for a many-faceted exploration of the changes experienced in Annang society during the first half of the twentieth century. The resulting book touches on such topics as local history and memory, changing relations between youth and elders, gender, the changing role of secret societies, religion, education, the breakdown of trust, the reorganisation of colonial rule, and colonial knowledge production.

The study is organised chronologically, starting with an overview of Annang society up to 1909, which looks at elements of Annang personhood in relation to lineage, initiation and conceptions of the soul, shape-shifting beliefs, and changes and tensions relating to palm-oil production. The following chapter, 'Resistance and revival, 1910–1929', examines the ways in which Ibibio and Annang made sense of Christianity and colonialism. 'Progressives and Power, 1930–1938' explores the flawed reorganisation of local administration and the politics of gender