

The *Women's War of 1929* makes a significant contribution to studies of African women, gender, colonialism, and colonial violence. Matera, Bastian, and Kent retell a familiar story with new sources and insights, and present perspectives that enrich our knowledge of this remarkable event.

Saheed Aderinto
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, North Carolina
saderinto@email.wcu.edu

Editors' note: For an extensive collection of primary documents, see *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria*, edited by Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock (Carolina Academic Press, 2011).

doi:10.1017/asr.2015.88

Alicia C. Decker. *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014. xviii + 244 pp. List of Illustrations. Acknowledgments. Abbreviations. Note on the Use of Names. Appendix: Methods and Sources. Notes. Maps. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$80.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0821421185.

President Idi Amin Dada remains an enigmatic figure in the history of African leadership. The commander of the Ugandan army before deposing President Milton Obote in 1971, Amin ruled the country by more than doubling the size of the military and creating new security organizations. He violently repressed political opposition, committing some of the most egregious human rights violations in the history of the country: between one hundred thousand and a half million persons disappeared or died before he himself was deposed in 1979. Focusing on the lives of women who survived his rule, Alicia Decker's meticulously researched and crisply written study explains not only why but how Amin's brutality reached the level it did. This is a particularly important contribution, because Ugandan women have been considered marginal to this sociopolitical history, as demonstrated by the dearth of scholarly or popular attention to their role.

Decker convincingly explores the highly gendered militarism of Amin's regime, which drew on and reproduced hyper-masculinized identities and practices to legitimate the dictator's brutal use of force. At the same time, new constructions of masculinity and femininity emerged in militaristic practices. "Weak" (feminized) men and "immoral" women were identified as threats to state security and thus legitimate targets of police and military violence, while "masculinized" (tough) women within the security forces and hyper-feminized "mothers of the nation" bolstered the legitimacy of Amin's rule. But while Amin tolerated few alternatives to these rigid gendered identities, Ugandans themselves had more complex relationships to the state, which Decker examines here with a focus on women in particular.

The author deftly draws upon multiple sources to compose a picture of life under Amin. These include political memoirs of the early years of Amin's life in the British colonial army, and the rich transcripts of the fifteen-volume report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights, convened after Amin was deposed, which reveal the mechanisms of torture and violence that Amin and his henchmen (and -women) employed to annihilate opposition. The women's point of view was obtained through interviews with former prominent women in Amin's political administration, who reported on another trick of the regime—promoting women's empowerment to garner political capital while in effect undermining the political will necessary to implement reform. Finally, Decker draws upon more than one hundred interviews with women from all walks of life as well as a few dozen men to detail the complex strategies women employed to avoid and at times resist the security apparatus, whose tentacles ultimately reached into the private lives of every man, woman, and child. These strategies ranged from dressing simply so as not to attract attention or denunciation to taking advantage of economic opportunities that were opened unintentionally by Amin's mass expulsion in 1972 of Asians, the majority of the country's entrepreneurs. Weaving together stories of women across the spectrum of Ugandan life, Decker shows the ways in which the culture of militarized masculinity led to its own undoing. She suggests that by alienating women, Amin's relentless repression had the counterproductive effect of undermining the base of his support among the "mothers of the nation," thereby contributing to the downfall of the regime.

In her final chapters, Decker explores the liberation struggle that eventually overthrew Amin in 1979, as well as the gendered legacies of violence in Uganda today, more than thirty years since the end of his reign and a decade since his death. Throughout the book she demonstrates the methodological and ethical challenges of conducting historical research on a period that still engenders fearful memories, and the book's appendix and the section titled "Methods and Sources" provide valuable guidelines for future research. Decker concludes by reminding the reader that women—more than mere victims or unwitting promoters of military rule—employed nuanced strategies to document and remember, pushing back against the legacies of the militarized state. The book examines closely the intersection of power, gender, and militarism at the heart of critical security studies. It also shows how everyday people navigate the realm of state power more effectively than is commonly thought. Collectively women both reproduced, and then helped to unravel, the hyper-masculinized military state.

Erin Baines
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia
erin.baines@ubc.ca

doi:10.1017/asr.2015.89