

Islam, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, anti-colonial resistance, human rights abuses and genocide.

Finally, as one of the book's guiding themes, the editors requested that contributors incorporate, explicitly or implicitly, Robert Rosenstone's analysis of the role of dramatic film in evoking the historical past, particularly his contrast between 'true invention' (fictional films that effectively and honestly grapple with what he calls the 'issues, ideas, data and arguments' of current historiography even while engaging in creative adaptations of the past), and 'false invention' (fictional films that intentionally violate the general preponderance of historical evidence, for ideological or propagandistic purposes).

In 2002, Rosenstone was the keynote speaker at the University of Cape Town's First International African Film and History Conference, convened by Bickford-Smith and Mendelsohn, and thus he was a logical choice for the editors. Rosenstone has become something of a fixture in the field for what the editors call his 'energetic defense' of dramatic film, arguing that cinema, no less than written history, has the ability to 'recount, explain, interpret and make meaning out of people and events in the past'.

While this may be true, it is less certain in some cases whether there is always a single, unitary body of historical evidence on a given subject by which we can readily determine whether a fictional film is, in fact, engaging in 'true' or 'false' invention. Similarly, to push Rosenstone's analysis in a slightly different direction, what do we do in the case of a filmmaker whose interpretation is compelling and original, but flies in the face of all existing literature on the subject? Moreover, a critique often levelled by grumbling historians is not simply that specific elements of a film are 'incorrect', but rather that the alterations made are merely gratuitous, and in fact do little to elucidate deeper processes of historical change. While Rosenstone has repeatedly taken historians to task for 'misunderstanding' the function of dramatic historical films, one might argue that the primary burden of justification remains with those filmmakers who alter historical 'facts' for purposes of narrative convenience.

Three minor notes about the book's layout: the text comes without illustrations; the bibliography, barely spanning three pages, is a bit short; and most egregiously, the hyphen in Bickford-Smith's name on the front cover is misplaced. Nevertheless, *Black and White in Colour* is a solid addition to the canon, and will prove useful for scholars studying the nuances of Western and non-Western reconstructions of African life. Moreover, the readability of the essays also makes this text a good choice for graduate students interested in the link between imperialism, images and identities.

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TIRAILLEURS AS A LINK BETWEEN FRANCE AND AFRICA

doi:10.1017/S0021853707002885

Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century.

By GREGORY MANN. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006. Pp. ix + 333.

\$84 (ISBN 0-8223-3775-X); \$23.95, paperback (ISBN 0-8223-3768-1).

KEY WORDS: West Africa, Mali, migration, military, war.

When the French Colonial History Society met in Dakar in the spring of 2006, the final plenary session was on the *tirailleurs*. The first two rows of the auditorium

were filled by aging veterans, all wearing white *boubous* adorned by a row of military medals. The event underlined the importance of the veterans as a link between France and its former African colonies. It is this relationship and the perceptions that France and the veterans had of each other that Gregory Mann chronicles and analyzes in this lucid study. Other colonial powers recruited and used soldiers from the colonies, but in none did they play as important a role as the *tirailleurs* in France. British colonial troops died in the jungles of Burma and the sands of Libya while the *tirailleurs* served in the trenches of northern France, in the fall of France in 1940 and its reconquest four years later. They also served in France's many colonial wars. Mann's book is informed by an intensive study of the veterans of San, a city in central Mali. Most of it, however, is based on archival work in France, Mali and Senegal. While he deals with veterans of different kinds, he gives special attention to career soldiers, who often spent long periods away from home in the service of France. In the first chapter, he discusses the history of a family of professional soldiers from San. Most of the chapter, however, deals with slavery and what it meant for an army that was recruited largely from slaves and former slaves. Though this reliance on former slaves was no longer true during and after the Second World War, Mann argues that the career soldiers were largely from ex-slave families and that the heritage of slavery shaped the development of an 'elaborate repertoire of obligation and reciprocity' (p. 37). Mann is very interested in discourse, and in particular in a culture of mutual obligation and the way it was perceived by French and Africans. Mann has a very good understanding of the ambiguities of African slavery and the complexities of Soudanic social structure. Those who served, especially the career soldiers, had an expectation of reciprocity.

This language of mutual obligation shaped struggles in different periods. After the First World War, demobilization was not smooth. Many French administrators feared that veterans of servile origin would prove a disruptive element. They sometimes did, but they also wanted a reward for their service and they did not want to return to their former lives. The administration found that they could be reintegrated not as simple peasants but as employees of the colonial state, but it sometimes discovered this only after some contestation. During the inter-war period, most of the humbler posts in the colonial administration, particularly those of interpreters and guards, went to veterans. Mann does not discuss the omnipresent *plantons*, who did various menial tasks. Veterans were also granted exemption from the *indigenat*, the law code that regulated subjects. The French did not at first welcome the associations which they organized, but they proved useful to the administration.

After the Second World War, the support of veterans was sought by both the colonial administration and the nationalist parties. Mann argues that veterans of the First World War and career soldiers tended to be supporters of the canton chiefs and the more conservative political parties. The short-timers from the Second World War tended to support the radical Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, but this varied somewhat by region and colony. To win the support of the veterans, France had to respond to their demands, in particular for pensions. This commitment was much reduced after 1959 but, in 2001, the French Council of State held that African veterans were entitled to the same pensions as their French counterparts. Mann also has an excellent chapter that deals with the military culture and the links of soldiers to their wives and to the communities they left behind. He has several brief but insightful passages on the role of wives. Finally, in the last chapter, he deals with the concept of 'blood debt' in the discourse of both the veterans and the French. This leads to a section on the *sans papiers*, illegal immigrants without papers in France today. At a time when most of the veterans

are getting old, the concept of blood debt has been transferred by African critics from an obligation to individuals who served the French state to an obligation to the societies from which these soldiers were conscripted. French public opinion does not concur.

All of this is done with clarity and subtlety. This is a superb book, which is at the same time a contribution to the history of Africa and of France.

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THE LIMITS OF INVENTION OF ETHNICITY

doi:10.1017/S0021853707002897

Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana. By CAROLA LENTZ. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. Pp. xi + 345. £29.95 (ISBN 978-0-7486-2401-0).

KEY WORDS: Ghana, colonial administration, ethnicity, identity, local history, politics/political.

This book is the English version – half the size of the original – of a book on the same subject published in Germany, itself half the size of the author's post-doctoral thesis. She regrets having to omit much of the historical detail so dear to her; fortunately, there is plenty left for the reader to be going on with. Her introduction stresses the long and tortuous process of political and intellectual interplay in what is now the Upper West Region of Ghana, between British administrators on the one hand, and, on the other, local groups and leaders who were initially organized by multiple networks of residence and locality – uncertainly shaped by warfare, slave-raiding, migrations and trade – but were gradually caught up in the opportunities, pressures and contradictions of British colonial rule and then of the state of Ghana.

Lentz explores the ways in which history is produced, not only the political and other motivations of the producers, but the resources available to them at the time. Officially, Ghana divides its population into 'traditional areas', but this andyone expression conceals two ideas introduced by the British and still central to Ghanaian politics: the idea of 'tribe' as the basic unit of African identity, and a distinction between tribes with rulers and those without. Early anthropology introduced the idea that in the earliest phase of social evolution tribes were acephalous and matrilineal; patrilineal tribes with centralized authority came later, demonstrating their superiority by conquering the others. During the nationalist phase of historiography in the 1960s, historians perpetuated this distinction by writing African history as the history of states, neglecting that of the stateless. In modern Ghana, everybody wants to belong to a chieftaincy, partly as a consequence of the colonial ideological legacy, partly in response to the fact that societies with chiefs tend to impose themselves on their neighbors who lack them.

Colonial administrators, adopting ethnic labels introduced by Muslim scholars in the past, thought they were discovering and reconstituting tribes that were naturally there, though damaged by the pervasive violence of the nineteenth century; they did not see how this process provided new political opportunities for the colonized. Over time, regroupings and revised labels accompanied administrative changes made necessary by local leaders with agendas of their own. When the British reluctantly allowed the White Fathers to introduce Christianity and schooling in 1929, a new source of power developed, with a certain realignment