

successive states ignored local understandings of, and access to, the forests. This tactic highlights the multivalent effects, beyond the economic, of scientific forestry initiatives. Alas, the book's geographic focus on the coastal hinterlands is more limited than the title suggests. Given the amount of forest land in other parts of Tanzania, one wonders how the story might change if these areas were also under consideration. But this small point does not detract from the work's power. It will certainly offer concerned scholars across the disciplines much to think about in assessing how environmental policies have shaped, and continue to shape, people's lives.

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THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION THROUGH THE PRISM OF MILITARY HISTORY

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The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa. By GEBRU TAREKE. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009. Pp. xx + 437. £30/\$45, hardback (ISBN 978-0-300-14163-4).

KEY WORDS: north-eastern Africa, Ethiopia, military, revolutions, war.

Students of modern Ethiopian history will be familiar with Gebru Tareke's abiding concerns, and this book is a logical progression from his earlier work looking at the roots of peasant revolt in Ethiopia. Though the author is only the latest in a long line of respected scholars to take on the subject of the Ethiopian revolution, this is the first comprehensive attempt to view the revolution through the prism of military history. The connection between war and revolution is an excellent organizing theme and, to paraphrase Tareke, 'war is not always the har-binger of revolution but revolutions often ignite wars' (p. 5).

However, this is not solely military history, though there is plenty of it, presented in a lively style and rich in anecdote and observation. There is also much here for those interested in the history of the modern Ethiopian state, as well as the wider study of comparative rebel movements and counter-insurgency campaigns. Tareke shows confident command of the vast general literature on revolutions, insurgency, and military history, liberally sprinkling the text with pithy maxims from the theoreticians and practitioners of revolutions and insurgency – Trotsky, Mao, and Clausewitz not least among them.

The author is an excellent and intimate guide to the specifics of modern Ethiopian history. The topic is daunting, but the narrative is divided well, taking into account: the roots of the Ethiopian revolution; the revolution itself; the internal struggle between left-wing radicals; the military's usurpation of the Marxist agenda; and the resulting 17 years of civil–military struggle for the Ethiopian state, including the Eritrean war of independence. Tareke sets the context of the revolution and the roots of the rebel movements especially expertly. The picture that he presents of the last decade of Emperor Haile Selassie's rule is clearly from the perspective of the regime's sharpest critics, the urban intelligentsia and student class (and perhaps betraying the author's own ideological journey). This account is also a valuable guide to the internecine and arcane disputes between revolutionary factions that still guide Ethiopian politics today.

Tareke duly acknowledges his scholarly predecessors, and early on gives full credit to Christopher Clapham's critical insight that 'between 1975 and 1991 two elite-led revolutions with more or less the same ideas and ideologies were simultaneously waged in Northern Ethiopia' (p. 7). One of the areas where this book goes beyond previous accounts of the revolution and war is in Tareke's use of primary material from Ethiopian voices, using official archives, oral interviews, memoirs, and novels written in Amharic and Tigrayan – as well as the popular poetic couplets, an abiding feature of Ethiopian colloquial political discourse – all of which give the account real authenticity.

Though the author is mostly even-handed in his treatment of government and rebels (with much personal detail of the protagonists), he does not shy from critical – sometimes devastatingly so – analyses of failures, especially of the Derg-led Ethiopian state. The descriptions of the various campaigns not only historically map the battles that defined and scarred a generation but also serve as a salutary and sobering reminder of the human cost and impact of modern war (for example, the Somali campaigns and the battles for Eritrea). While much of the book documents the harsh reality of war on the ground, it also pays attention to the arguably more important, often brutally mundane, state management of war (and counter-insurgency) and the insurgents' own equally absorbing tasks of organization of fighters and 'liberated' populations. The contrasts are illuminating, as is the evident challenge of the transformation of armed guerrilla groups into civilian government.

In the region, and among the wider Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora, there will be many who will perceive bias and who will identify the author with a certain wing of the revolutionary generation, or with his ethnicity or class background. His Ethiopian standpoint in his treatment of the Eritrean narrative will draw inevitable criticism. Yet Gebru Tareke wisely leaves space in his concluding chapter for an examination of the legacies of the revolutionary conflicts and the impact of victory of the two principal insurgent groups (and erstwhile allies) the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front in Eritrea, and the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front in Ethiopia. The devastating recourse to conventional, state-based war of these previous guerrilla brothers-in-arms in the 1998–2000 Ethiopian–Eritrea border war gets its own postscript. But the author offers an equally challenging reflection of the dangerous lack of reconciliation between the protagonists of Clapham's twin elite-led revolutions in Ethiopia itself.

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AN IMPRESSIVE SYNTHESIS OF MADAGASCAR'S HISTORY

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Madagascar: A Short History. By SOLOFO RANDRIANJA and STEPHEN ELLIS.
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(ISBN 978-0-22670-420-3).

KEY WORDS: Madagascar, historiography, sources.

At last, a general history of Madagascar crafted by professional historians trained as Africanists and writing for both a general audience and colleague